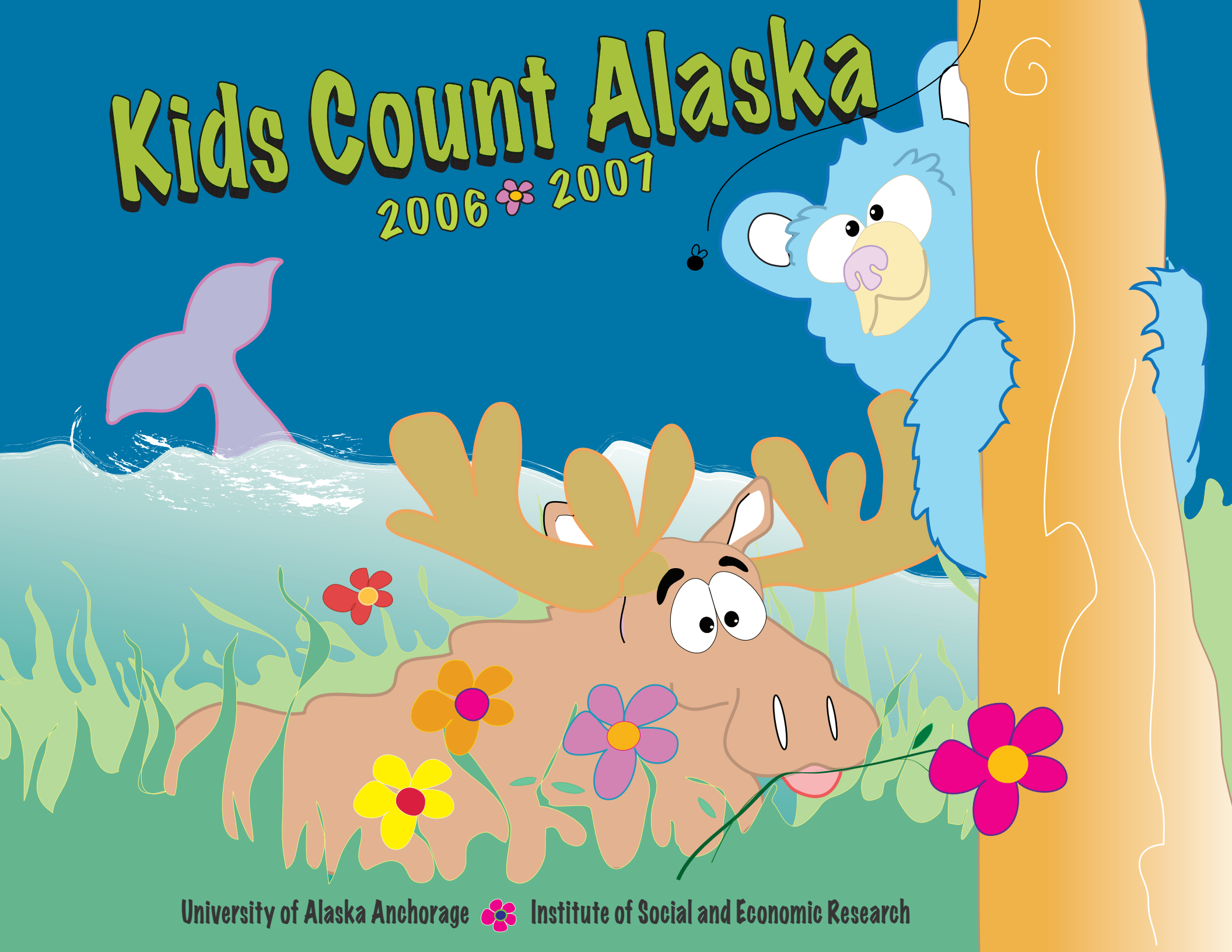


Kids Count Alaska

2006  2007





Kids Count Alaska thanks Wells Fargo Bank for a generous grant that funded the printing of this data book.

The Next Stage®

Kids Count Alaska 2006/2007

2006/2007 Data Book

Prepared by Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER),
University of Alaska Anchorage

Study Team

Project Director: Virgene Hanna, ISER

Researchers: Irma Schreiner, Research Assistant, ISER

Patricia DeRoche, Research Associate, ISER

Claudia Lampman, Professor of Psychology, UAA

Editor: Linda Leask, ISER

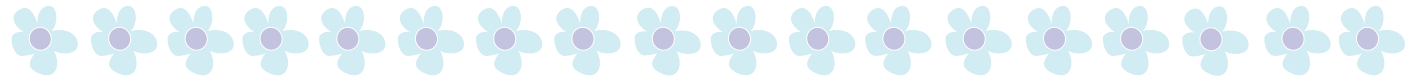
Graphic Designer: Clemencia Amaya-Merrill, ISER

Call Kids Count Alaska: 907-786-5431 • Web site: www.kidscount.alaska.edu



The cover and other illustrations in this data book are by Sebastian Amaya Garber, who grew up in Alaska. He is currently attending Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, where he is working toward a degree in industrial design.

Acknowledgments



We thank many people for their help with this book.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Division of Juvenile Justice

Susan McDonough

Robert Seward

Division of Public Health

Tariq Ali

Sandy Bauer

Stephanie Walden

Office of Children's Services

Mike Matthews

Marcus Gho

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Heather Brown

Andrew Hohenthauer

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE

DEVELOPMENT

Greg Williams

Eddie Hunsinger

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Darla Siver

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Elizabeth Kneebone

This research was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank the foundation for its support, but the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the foundation.

Kids Count is a nationwide program of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The foundation produces a national data book each year, detailing the condition of America's children. It also sponsors Kids Count programs in all 50 states. Feel free to copy, distribute, or otherwise use information from the Kids Count Alaska Data Book, citing the source as:

Kids Count Alaska 2006/2007 Data Book, prepared by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.



Introduction

Introduction	4
Highlights	8

Infancy

Prenatal Care in Alaska	11
Babies With Low Birth Weight	13
Infant Mortality	14

Economic Well-Being

Children Living in Poverty	19
Children With No Parent Working Full-Time	21
Children in Single-Parent Households	22
Births to Teens	23
Health-Care Coverage	25

Education

Teens Who Drop Out	31
Teens Not in School and Not Working	33
School Achievement	34

Children In Danger

Child Death Rate	39
Teen Death Rate	41
Child Abuse and Neglect	43
Child Injuries	44

Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Justice	49
------------------------	----

Introduction



ABOUT THIS YEAR'S BOOK

Every year the Kids Count Alaska data book reports on how the children of Alaska are doing. But we also like to tell readers a bit more about life in Alaska, to help them understand the place Alaska's children call home.

This year, we're celebrating the wildlife that is so much a part of life in Alaska. Alaskans watch, hunt, photograph, and coexist with hundreds of large and small species of animals and birds. That coexistence is not always easy for either the wildlife or the people, but it is always interesting.

An increasing number of tourists are also being drawn to Alaska for the opportunity to see wildlife that is either scarce or non-existent in other areas of the United States and the world.

The whimsical wildlife illustrations on the cover and at the start of each indicator section are the work of Sebastian Amaya Garber, a talented young artist who grew up in Alaska but is now working toward a degree in industrial design at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. The flip side of each illustration describes something about the specific animals and birds we're profiling, which are:

- The sea otter, whose rich fur brought the Russians to Alaska in the century before the United States bought Alaska
- The brown bear, one of the most respected and feared land animals in North America
- The raven, which plays a big role in Alaska Native culture and is one of the smartest, toughest birds anywhere
- The puffin, whose large, yellow-orange bill and orange feet make it a stand-out in Alaska's coastal waters
- The moose, which can weigh up to 1,500 pounds and is often seen wandering neighborhoods and crossing streets in Alaska's largest urban areas
- The humpback whale, whose dramatic breaches make it a favorite of Alaskans and visitors along the southern coast of Alaska in the summertime

WHAT IS KIDS COUNT ALASKA?

Kids Count Alaska is part of a nationwide program, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to collect and publicize information about children's health, safety, and economic status. We pull together information from many sources and present it all in one place. We hope this book gives Alaskans a broad picture of how the state's children are doing and provides parents, policymakers, and others interested in the welfare of children with information they need to improve life for children and families. Our goals are:

- Broadly distributing information about the status of Alaska's children
- Creating an informed public, motivated to help children
- Comparing the status of children in Alaska with children nationwide, and presenting additional Alaska indicators (including regional breakdowns) when possible

WHO ARE ALASKA'S CHILDREN?

More than 206,000 children ages 18 or younger live in Alaska—just under a third of Alaska's 2006 population of about 671,000.

That's an increase of about 15% in the number of children since 1990. During the past 15 years the age structure of Alaska children has also changed, with younger children making up a declining share and teenagers a growing share. In 1990, children ages 4 or younger made up 31% of all children; by 2006 that share had dropped to 26%. Among those 15 to 18, the 1990 share was about 16%, but it had risen to 22% by 2006.

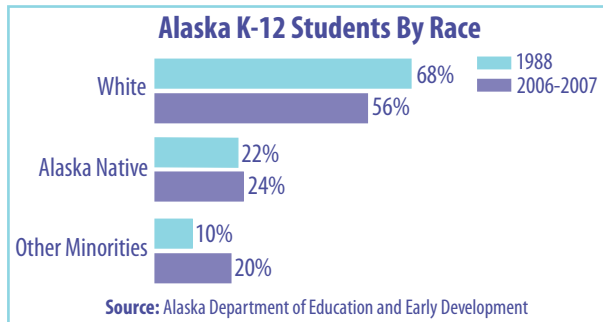
Boys outnumber girls in Alaska by close to 6%. There are more boys than girls in every age group. Even among infants, boys outnumbered girls by 8% in 2006.

Alaska's children have also grown more racially diverse in the past two decades, as illustrated by the figure showing Alaska's school children by race. In 1988, 68% of school children were White and 32% were from minorities—primarily Alaska Natives.

Alaska's Children by Age and Sex, 1990 and 2006

	1990				2006			
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female		
Total Alaska Population	550,043	289,868	260,175	670,958	343,990	326,968		
Children By Age	Number	Percent		Number	Percent			
Under 1	11,963	6.6%	6,109 5,854	10,759	5.2%	5,596 5,163		
1-4	44,014	24.5%	22,616 21,398	43,180	20.9%	22,342 20,838		
5-9	51,508	28.6%	26,543 24,965	52,262	25.3%	27,015 25,247		
10-14	42,939	23.9%	22,333 20,606	54,390	26.5%	27,648 26,742		
15	7,652	4.3%	4,021 3,631	11,736	5.7%	6,031 5,705		
16	7,341	4.1%	3,786 3,555	11,937	5.8%	6,113 5,824		
17	7,453	4.1%	3,887 3,556	11,165	5.4%	5,774 5,391		
18	7,069	3.9%	3,834 3,235	10,691	5.2%	5,500 5,191		
Total 18 and under	179,939	100.0%	93,129 86,810	206,120	100.0%	106,019 100,101		

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development 2005 Age, Race, and Sex Estimates



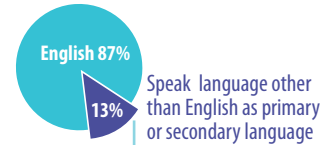
By the 2006-2007 school year, 56% of students were White and 44% were from minorities. The fastest growth was among minorities other than Alaska Native, whose share of enrollment jumped from 10% to 20% between 1988 and the 2006-2007 school year.

More international immigrants have also been arriving in Alaska—and especially in Anchorage and other urban areas—in recent decades. The growing international character of Alaska’s children is evident in the array of languages spoken by students in the Anchorage School District, where about 40% of all Alaska school children are enrolled.

Most of Anchorage’s school children speak English as their primary language, but about one in seven speaks a different language. The most common languages other than English are (as the adjacent figure shows) Spanish, Tagalog, Samoan, and Hmong. Languages of other southeast Asian countries, as well as Russia and Albania, are also among the more common. Two Alaska Native languages, Yupik and Inupiaq, are also in the top ten.

Languages Spoken by Anchorage School District Students, 2007

Total students: 47,997

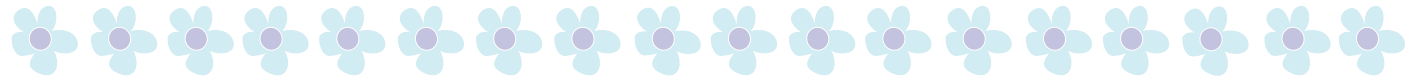


1. Spanish	1,690
2. Tagalog (Philippines)	886
3. Samoan (Pacific Island)	838
4. Hmong (Southeast Asia)	748
5. Korean	286
6. Lao (Laos)	276
7. Yupik	260
8. Russian	138
9. Mien (Thailand)	111
10. Inupiaq	73
11. Albanian	73
All other languages	744
Total	6,123

Source: Anchorage School District

More than half the children in the state live either in Anchorage or the adjacent Mat-Su Borough (as the map on the next page shows). The other half of Alaska’s children are far less concentrated, with 5% in the Northern Region, 7% in the Southwest, 16% in the Interior, 11% along the Gulf Coast, and 9% in Southeast.

White children (ages 19 and under) are in the majority statewide and in most regions, but in the Northern and Southwest regions most children are Alaska Native. Black children make up less than 5% of children statewide, but that share varies widely by region—with Black children making up 7% of children in Anchorage but less than 1% in the Northern and Southwest regions. The percentage of Asian and Pacific Island children statewide is close to 6%. That share also varies considerably but not quite as dramatically by region, with over 8% in Anchorage but just 2% in the Southwest.



Boroughs and Census Areas, by Region

Municipality of Anchorage

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Gulf Coast Region

Kenai Peninsula Borough
Kodiak Island Borough
Valdez-Cordova Census Area

Interior Region

Denali Borough
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area

Northern Region

Nome Census Area
North Slope Borough
Northwest Arctic Borough

Southeast Region

Haines Borough
City and Borough of Juneau
Ketchikan Gateway Borough
Prince of Wales/Outer Ketchikan Census Area
City and Borough of Sitka
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon Census Area
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area
Yakutat Borough

Southwest Region

Aleutians East Borough
Aleutians West Census Area
Bethel Census Area
Bristol Bay Borough
Dillingham Census Area
Lake and Peninsula Borough
Wade Hampton Census Area

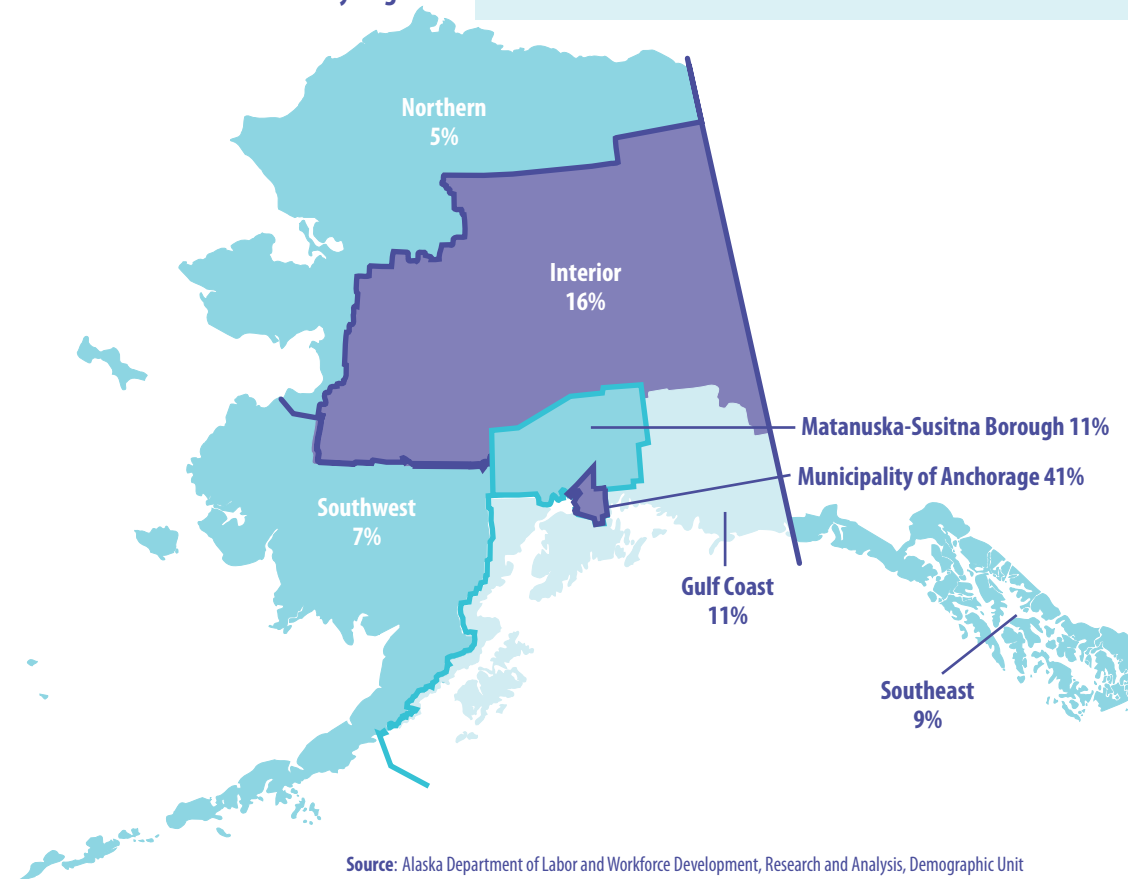
Racial Composition of Children (19 and Under), by Region, 2005

Region	White	Alaska Native ^a	Black	Asian/Pacific Isl.
Anchorage	72.6%	12.2%	6.9%	8.3%
Mat-Su	83.5%	10.9%	2.3%	3.2%
Gulf Coast	78.7%	13.8%	1.3%	6.3%
Interior	74.0%	16.2%	6.6%	3.2%
Northern	13.1%	83.6%	0.7%	2.7%
Southeast	68.4%	24.4%	1.2%	6.0%
Southwest	13.5%	83.8%	0.7%	2.0%
Alaska	67.2%	22.6%	4.5%	5.8%

^aAlso includes American Indians, who make up 0.5% of Alaska's population.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis, Demographic Unit

Percent Distribution of Alaska Children by Region



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis, Demographic Unit



ALASKA/U.S. COMPARISONS

The table below compares conditions among Alaska children with the U.S. averages for the major Kids Count indicators, in 2000 and in either 2004 or 2005. (For some indicators, the most recent data is for 2004.) We can see several changes in Alaska and nationwide since 2000:

- The share of babies born at low weight (under 5.5 pounds) increased in both Alaska and the country as a whole, but Alaska’s rate remains the lowest in the nation.
- The share of children living in single-parent families stayed the same in Alaska but was up slightly nationwide.
- The percentage of teenagers not in school and not working increased in Alaska but dropped slightly in the U.S. as a whole.
- The share of children living in poverty was up in both Alaska and across the country.
- The percentage of teenagers dropping out of school was up in Alaska but down nationwide.
- The teen death rate dropped in Alaska and the U.S. as a whole, but the child death rate was up in Alaska.
- The proportion of children with under-employed parents dropped in Alaska but rose nationwide.

Comparing Alaska with U.S. averages in 2005, we see:

- Alaska ranked among the best in the country for its lower share of babies born at low weight and its lower share of children living in poverty.
- Alaska ranked near the U.S. average in its infant mortality rate, teen birth rate, and percentage of children in single-parent families.
- Alaska ranked among the worst for its higher percentages of idle teenagers; higher share of children living in families with no parent working full-time; and higher rates of deaths among children and teenagers.

INTERPRETING THE INDICATORS

Every year we remind readers that Alaska has a relatively small number of children—and even smaller numbers when they’re divided by region, race, and sex. That means rates for a number of indicators are based on small numbers that can be up one year and down the next. We try to compensate for that, whenever possible, by using averages over several years for our regional indicators.

Also, keep in mind that the U.S. Census Bureau is still working to make the American Community Survey—which is now used as a source for several indicators—more representative of Alaskans

living in the state’s small remote communities. The bureau is still adding to its sample size in rural areas, and to protect the confidentiality of those surveyed in very small places it currently does not report which rural communities it surveys. Also, communities are surveyed at different times of the year, depending on where they fall in the survey cycle. The timing of the survey likely influences the responses to some questions—but again, we don’t know which communities are surveyed when.

So while the ACS provides more timely information than was previously available, we believe it will more accurately reflect the well-being of children in rural Alaska as time goes on.

Alaska and U.S. Comparison, 2000 and 2005

	Alaska		U.S.		Alaska Rank
	2000	2004/2005*	2000	2004/2005*	2004/2005
Alaska Among the Best					
Low-weight births (Percent)	5.6%	6.0%	7.6%	8.1%	1
Children living in poverty (Percent of children in families below federal poverty line)	13%	15%	17%	19%	16
Alaska Near U.S. Average					
Infant mortality rate (Deaths per 1,000 births)	6.8	6.7	6.9	6.8	25
Teen birth rate (Births per 100,000 girls 15-19)	49	39	48	41	25
Single-parent families (Percent of children in single-parent families)	30%	30%	31%	32%	21
Alaska Among the Worst					
Teen dropouts (Percent ages 16-19)	8%	9%	11%	7%	36
Child death rate (Deaths per 100,000 children 1-14)	32	35	22	20	49
Teen death rate (Deaths per 100,000 ages 15-19)	142	111	67	66	50
Idle teens (Percent not working or going to school)	8%	10%	9%	8%	40
Underemployed parents (Percent of children in families with no parent working full-time)	49%	41%	32%	34%	47

*Some data available for 2005, some only for 2004.

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Book 2007

Highlights

IMPROVING GRADUATION RATES

In every data book, before discussing all the individual measures of children's well-being in Alaska, we highlight one or more issues that have been especially prominent in the state during the previous year.

Alaskans have been talking a lot recently about why so many of the state's teenagers aren't graduating from high school—and why so many who do graduate don't go on to college.

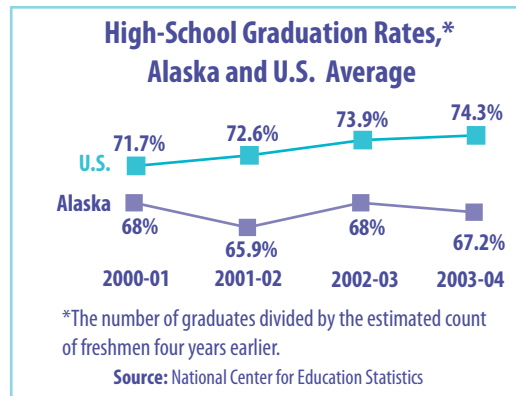
Only about two-thirds of Alaska's high-school students graduate, compared with three-quarters nationally. Those are figures from the National Center for Education Statistics, which measures the graduation rate based on the number of students who started high school four years earlier. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development measures the graduation rate somewhat differently—and in fact the department's reported 2006 graduation rate is even lower, at 60%.

Under either measure, Alaska's graduation rate is considerably below the national average—which in itself is not impressive. Thousands of students in Alaska and tens of thousands nationwide aren't even finishing high school.

Students from minorities are also less likely to graduate, in Alaska and nationwide. In 2006, fewer than half the Alaska Native and Black seniors, just over half the Hispanic seniors, and 60% of Asian and Pacific Island seniors graduated—compared with 68% of White students. Students whose English is limited, who have disabilities, or who come from low-income families are also less likely to graduate.

And among those who do get their high-school diplomas, Alaskans are less likely to go on to college. The adjacent figure shows what happened to students who started high school in 2000, in both Alaska and across the country.

In Alaska, 67% of those students graduated four years later, in 2004, and 33% didn't. Those who did graduate were almost evenly divided between those who went on to college right after graduation (33%) and those who didn't (34%).

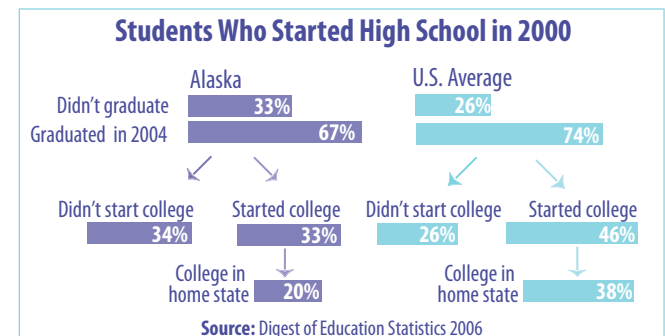
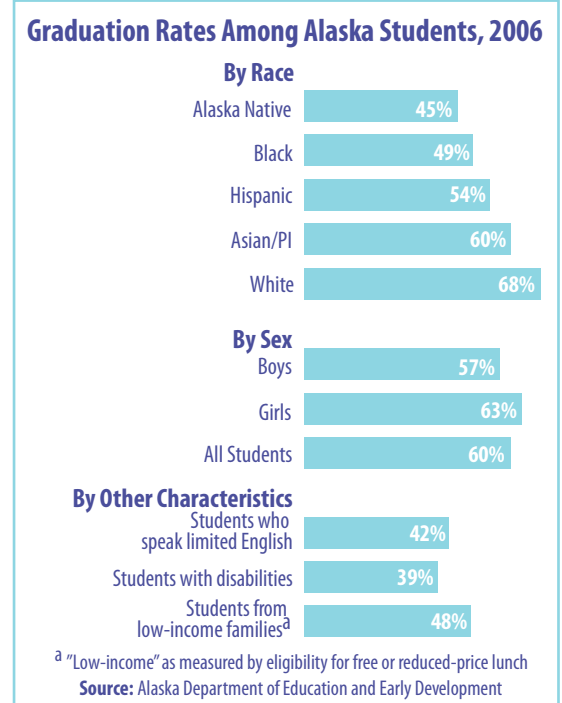


So only a third of Alaska's high-school students went on to college in recent years, with about one-fifth attending in-state schools. Nationwide, 74% of seniors graduated in 2004, and 46%—nearly half—went right on to college.

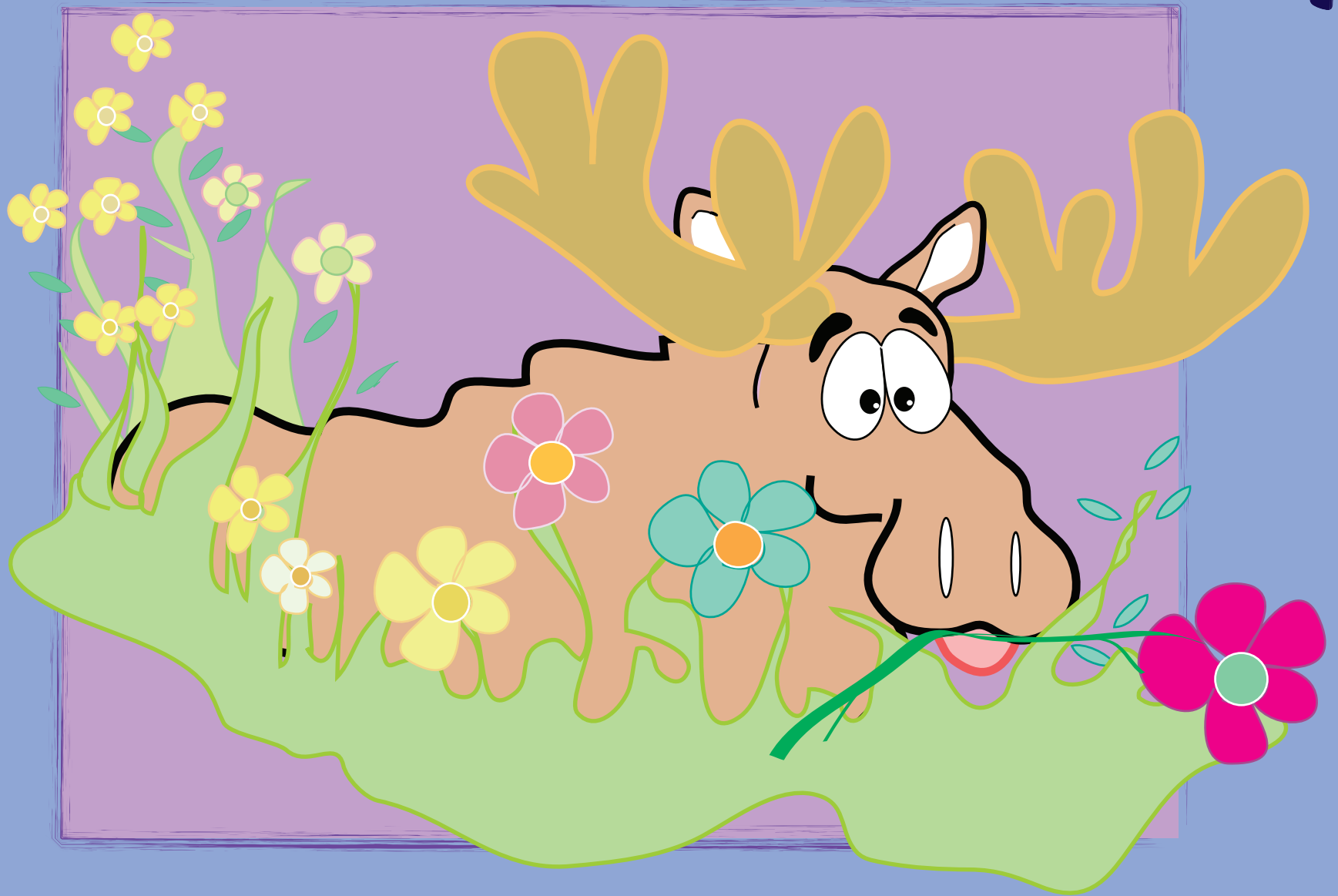
Why are so many students dropping out of school around the country—and why is the problem worse in Alaska? And why do so few Alaskans go on to college? These are very hard questions to answer, and state, local, and university officials are looking for answers in various ways.

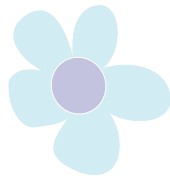
Some educators believe the problem starts even before children enter kindergarten or first grade—they argue that children who attend pre-school learn better and are more likely to stay in school and graduate. Only about 24% of 3- and 4-year-olds nationwide attend public pre-schools, and in Alaska that figure is just 19%, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research. There are efforts underway to expand public pre-school in Alaska—for example, Best Beginnings, a partnership of government and private industry.

Other suggestions offered at a 2006 public forum on education at the University of Alaska Anchorage included increasing the time students spend in school; finding new ways to strengthen basic skills for all students; improving school accountability measures; investing in parent and community involvement in schools; and reducing teacher turnover, especially in rural districts.



Infancy





Moose are among Alaska's biggest and best-known wildlife, and in 1998 the Alaska Legislature designated the moose as the official state animal. Adult moose can weigh 800 to 1,500 pounds and eat as much as 40 to 60 pounds of vegetation a day. Recent estimates of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game put statewide numbers of moose at roughly 150,000 to 175,000. They can be found in both urban and rural areas throughout most of Alaska, particularly the southcentral and interior regions. Hundreds of moose live within the city of Anchorage (human population 270,000), especially in the winter, when they move down from the surrounding Chugach Mountains.

Many people not familiar with moose mistakenly think of them as large, somewhat comic but essentially harmless animals. It's true they generally avoid encounters with people, but they will charge—when they're protecting calves, feel threatened, or have been harassed, for instance—and can seriously injure or even kill people by stomping them. Keeping a safe distance from moose is always a good plan.

Sources of information: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (<http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/biggame/moose.php>); Moose Facts (<http://www.cutemoose.net/moose>); Alaska Science Forum (<http://www.gi.alaska.edu/ScienceForum/ASF14/1450.html>); Alaska Moose Federation (<http://www.growmoremoose.org>)

DEFINITION

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics uses the Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization (APNCU) index to show the levels of prenatal care in Alaska, and we do the same. In earlier years we used a measure called the Kessner index. The two are not equivalent, so newer numbers cannot be compared with the older numbers. The APNCU index incorporates the month a pregnant woman begins getting care, the number of prenatal visits, and the gestational age of the baby at birth. The recommended number of visits is set by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, based on prenatal-care standards for uncomplicated pregnancies and adjusted for gestational age at delivery. The index does not assess the quality of care, nor does it adjust for any risks mothers may face. It divides prenatal care into four levels:

Adequate plus: Prenatal care began in the 1st or 2nd month and the mother made 110% or more of recommended visits.

Adequate: Prenatal care began in the 3rd or 4th month and the mother made 80% to 109% of recommended visits.

Intermediate: Prenatal care began in the 5th or 6th month and the mother made 50% to 79% of recommended visits.

Inadequate: No prenatal care, or care only in the 7th month or later, and the mother made less than 50% of recommended visits.

SIGNIFICANCE

Prenatal care helps pregnant women stay healthy and deliver healthy babies. It provides early detection of potential health problems and advises women about the consequences of taking drugs, using tobacco, and drinking alcohol. It also emphasizes the importance of good nutrition and other measures, like taking folic acid, to help prevent certain birth defects. Prenatal care can also help expectant mothers manage pre-existing and pregnancy-related conditions like diabetes and hypertension. Such prenatal care is important for all pregnant women, but especially for three groups known to be at high risk for problems—the young, the unmarried, and those with little education.

DATA

Pregnant women in Alaska are less likely to receive prenatal care than women nationwide. The table shows Alaska mothers are less likely to receive care during the first trimester and more likely to receive late or no prenatal care.

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care, 2005

U.S. 3.5% Alaska 4.9%

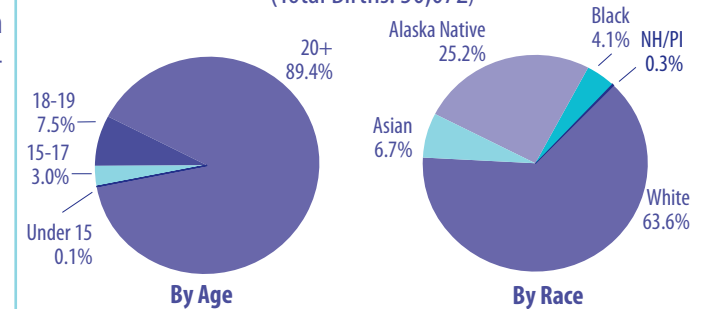
Percentage of Mothers Receiving Care During First Trimester, 2005

U.S. 83.9% Alaska 80.2%

Source: *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 56, No. 6, December 5, 2007

Births in Alaska,* 2001-2005, by Age and Race of Mother

(Total Births: 50,072)



*Excludes small numbers of births to mothers whose race or age is unknown
Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

The pie chart shows that between 2001 and 2005 there were just over 50,000 births in Alaska—about 300 fewer than in the previous 5-year period. Nearly 90% of these babies were born to women at least 20 years old. Almost 8% were born to women between 18 and 19, and 3% to teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17. A very small share—about 0.1%—were born to girls under 15.

One-quarter of babies born between 2001 and 2005 had Alaska Native mothers, almost 7% Asian, just over 4% Black, and less than half a percent Pacific Island or Native Hawaiian. Almost two-thirds (64%) were born to White mothers.

Here in Alaska prenatal care varies greatly by age, race, and region. The bar graphs on the next page show percentages of Alaska mothers receiving less than adequate prenatal care during the period from 2001 to 2005, by the mother's age, race, and region of residence. "Less than adequate" care is made up of the "inadequate" and "intermediate" categories of care, as measured by the APNCU index. The top part of the stacked bars represents women receiving inadequate care, including women who did not receive any prenatal care at all; the bottom part shows those receiving intermediate care.

More than one-third of all Alaska mothers received less-than-adequate prenatal care in the period 2001 to 2005. Our numbers show that the younger the mother, the more likely she was to receive less-than-adequate care. Half of those younger than 15 had inadequate care, and another 11% received intermediate care—meaning 61% of this most vulnerable group got less-than-adequate care. Among those 15 to 17, 30% had inadequate care and 19% intermediate care—so nearly half received less-than-adequate care. The mothers 18 to 19 years old were somewhat more likely to get prenatal care, but 44% of them still had less-than-adequate care. Those 20 and older were more likely to get the recommended levels of prenatal care. Even so, 34% of those older mothers obtained less-than-adequate care.

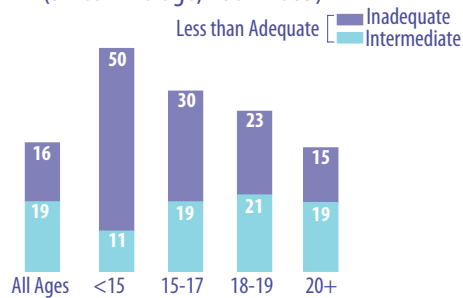
There were wide differences in levels of prenatal care from 2001 to 2005 among women living in different regions. Generally, women in the most remote regions with the harshest weather tended to get less prenatal care. The Southwest region had the highest percentage of mothers receiving less-than-adequate care (68%), and the Northern region was second highest (55%). Southeast Alaska, at 22%, had the lowest percentage of mothers receiving less-than-adequate care, while the Mat-Su area was second lowest at 25%.

Prenatal Care in Alaska (continued)

The adequacy of prenatal care also varied substantially by race during the period 2001 through 2005. More than half (53%) of Alaska Native mothers did not receive adequate care. Many of these Alaska Native women also live in the most remote areas of the state, where specialized medical care is more limited than in the urban areas. Among women of other races, about 28% of White women, 31% of Black women, 34% of Pacific Island women, and 36% of Asian women failed to get adequate prenatal care.

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less-Than-Adequate Care, by Age

(5-Year Average, 2001-2005)

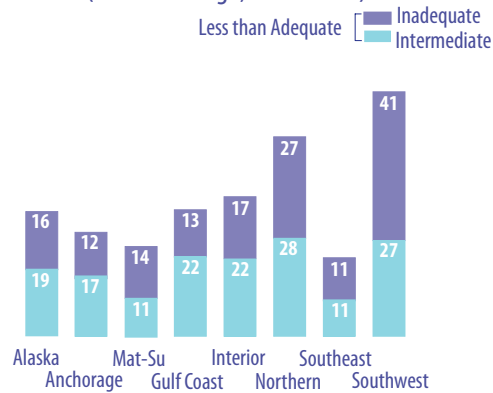


Note: See text for description of recent changes in definitions and method of calculation.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less-Than-Adequate Care, by Region

(5-Year Average, 2001-2005)

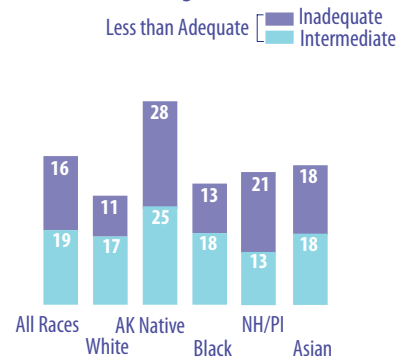


Note: See text for description of recent changes in definitions and method of calculation.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less-Than-Adequate Care, by Race

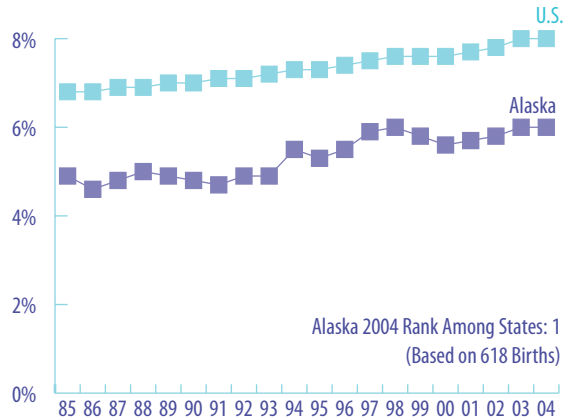
(5-Year Average, 2001-2005)



Note: See text for description of recent changes in definitions and method of calculation.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Percent of Babies With Low Birth Weight
Trend 1985-2004



Alaska 2004 Rank Among States: 1
(Based on 618 Births)

Source: 2007 National Kids Count Data Book

Low birth weight and premature birth (birth before the full gestation period of 37 weeks) tend to be related to either behavior of the mother or socioeconomic disadvantages she may face. Women can modify some behavior before and during pregnancy to reduce risks—they can quit smoking, eat enough for sufficient weight gain, and not drink or use drugs. But socioeconomic disadvantages—like being young, unmarried, and lacking a high-school diploma—are not easily overcome.⁴ A recent United Nations report pointed out, “In the industrialized world, cigarette smoking during pregnancy is the leading cause of low birth weight. In developed and developing countries alike, teenagers who give birth when their own bodies have yet to finish growing run the risk of bearing underweight babies.”⁵

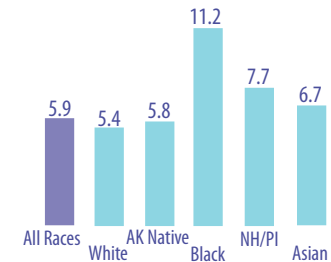
One recent study determined that 10% of all health-care costs for children are for babies with low birth weight.⁶ Coupled with this high price tag are other costs—such as more time some children have to spend in preschool and special education programs, as well as the financial burden for families as they try to provide for their children’s well-being.⁷

DATA

In 2004 Alaska had the lowest rate of babies with low birth weight in the United States—6% compared with the national rate of 8.1%—as it has consistently since 1985. But the rates in both Alaska and the U.S. as a whole have slowly climbed, as the trend graph shows. Also, nationally and in Alaska, Black infants are two to three times as likely as White infants to be born small. But even though this disparity has been documented for many years, numerous studies have yet to pinpoint a specific cause.

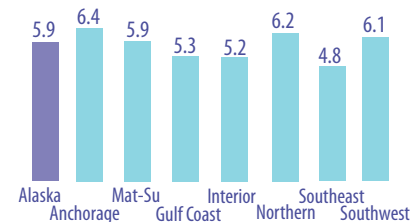
From 2001 through 2005, the average percentage of Alaska babies born with low birth weight was just below 6%—about 0.1% higher than in the previous five years. During the most recent period 11.2% of Black babies had low birth weight, compared with 7.7% of Pacific Islander babies and 6.7% of Asian babies. Alaska’s Black, Pacific Islander, and Asian populations are relatively small, so there aren’t many births per year—and a slight increase or

Percentage of Alaska Babies With Low Birth Weight, by Race
(5-Year Average, 2001-2005)



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Percentage of Alaska Babies With Low Birth Weight, by Region
(5-Year Average, 2001-2005)



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

decrease can create wide fluctuations in annual averages. Babies born to the two largest racial groups had much lower rates—5.8% among Alaska Native babies and 5.4% among White babies.

By region, rates of low birth weight varied from 4.8% to 6.4% in recent years with a state average of 5.9%. The Southeast region had the lowest percentage of low-birth-weight babies, while Anchorage had the highest. Right behind Anchorage were the Northern region at 6.2% and the Southwest region at 6.1%. Generally, because we are dealing with larger numbers, regional percentages do not fluctuate as much as percentages by race.

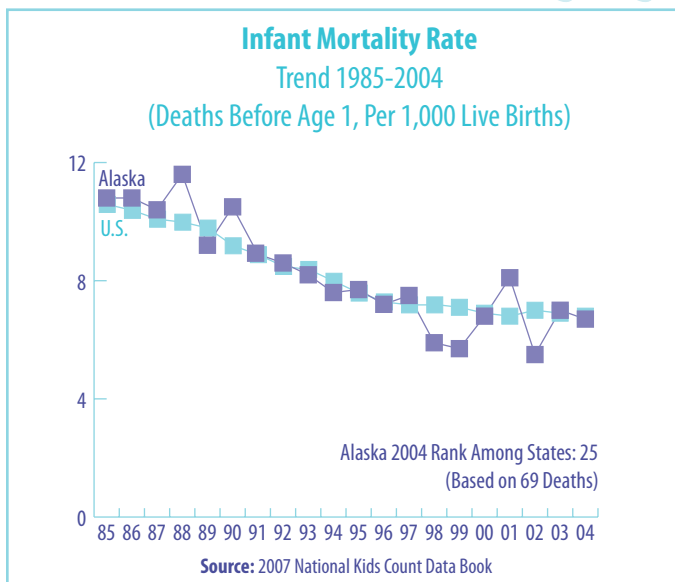
DEFINITION

How is low birth weight defined? And what about very low birth weight? Infants born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (2,500 grams) are considered low birth weight; those born weighing less than 3.3 pounds (1,500 grams) are very low birth weight. In this indicator, the baby is counted as being born in the region where the mother normally lives. So, for example, if the mother delivers her baby in Anchorage but she lives in Barrow, then the birth is counted in the Northern region.

SIGNIFICANCE

An infant born weighing less than 5.5 pounds is nearly 26 times more likely to die during its first year of life than one of normal birth weight—59 deaths compared with 2.3 deaths per 1,000 births.¹ Advances in medical technology have improved neonatal care and helped more very small babies survive. But these babies are at increased risk, throughout their lives, of having behavioral and health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, stunted growth, and low IQ.² They are also more likely to have developmental disabilities that affect their readiness to start school and their success in school.³

Infant Mortality



DATA

In 2004 Alaska ranked 25th among the 50 states, with an infant mortality rate of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with the national average of 6.8. Both rates were just slightly lower than in the previous year. In 2004, 69 infants died in Alaska, compared with 71 in 2003. The trend chart shows the overall decline in the infant mortality rates in Alaska and the U.S. over the past twenty years. The sharp fluctuations in Alaska's annual rate occur because Alaska has a small population, and relatively few infants die in any given year. Small changes in the number of actual deaths can have a noticeable effect on the death rate.

For the same reason, infant mortality rates by race—even 5-year averages—can fluctuate sharply. Relatively few Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander people live in Alaska (even though the minority population has grown substantially in recent years). Rates vary less among the two largest racial groups—White and Alaska Native. The bar graphs on the facing page show infant mortality rates by race and by region from 2001 through 2005.

The statewide rate of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births for 2001 to 2005 was slightly lower than the 6.8 deaths in the previous 5-year period. The rate for White infants decreased from 5.4 in 2000-2004 to 5.2 in 2001-2005 and for Alaska Native infants from 11 to 10.1.

Regionally, there are sharp differences in infant mortality rates. The regions with the lowest rate in recent years were Southeast at 5.7 deaths per 1,000 births and Anchorage at 5.8. The highest rates were in the Northern region, at 12.5, followed by the Southwest at 9.6. The remaining three regions had rates just below the statewide average, with the Mat-Su at 6, the Interior at 6.2, and the Gulf Coast at 6.6. All regions had lower rates than in the previous 5-year period—except for Anchorage, where the rate was only 5.2 from 2000 to 2004, and the Gulf Coast, where the rate was unchanged.

CAUSES OF INFANT DEATH

We obtained information on the causes of death among infants from death certificates compiled nationally by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and statewide by the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics. The chart on the facing page shows the leading causes of infant mortality in both the U.S. as a whole and in Alaska.

The number one cause of infant mortality continues to be birth defects, which are responsible for about 20% of infant deaths in Alaska and the entire nation.⁹ Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the third leading cause in both Alaska and the U.S. as a whole.

But accidents are much more likely to kill infants in Alaska than nationwide. Accidents are the second-highest cause of infant mortality in Alaska, accounting for 14% of deaths, while nationally they rank sixth, at 4% of deaths.

By contrast, low birth weight and short gestation are more likely to kill infants in the U.S., accounting for 17% of infant deaths nationally but 5% in Alaska.

Together, the three leading causes of infant mortality in Alaska—birth defects, SIDS, and accidents—represent 48% of infant deaths, compared with 32% nationally.¹⁰

DEFINITION

The infant mortality rate is the number of deaths among infants less than one year old, per 1,000 live births. Infant deaths in Alaska are reported by the mother's place of residence rather than the infant's place of death.

SIGNIFICANCE

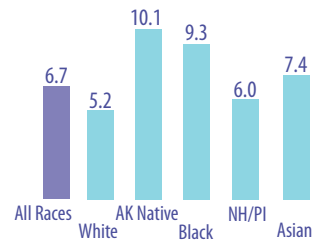
The infant mortality rate provides a fairly good picture of a country's living conditions because it reflects access to and availability of medical care for infants and their mothers. It also reflects the quality of health care, housing, sanitation, nutrition, and other factors that affect the health of infants.

Even though the United States has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, it still has one of the highest infant mortality rates among industrialized countries. Among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the U.S. had the second-highest per capita income and the highest infant mortality rate in 2006. That rate was seven deaths per 1,000 births in the U.S., compared with just three in Japan, the country with the lowest infant mortality rate; Japan has over half the per capita income as the United States.⁸



Infant Mortality Rate, by Race

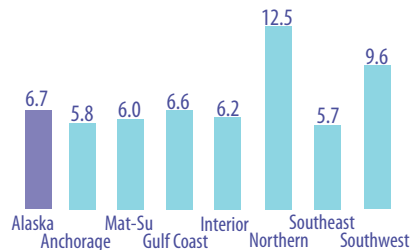
(Per 1,000 Births, 5-Year Average, 2001-2005)



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

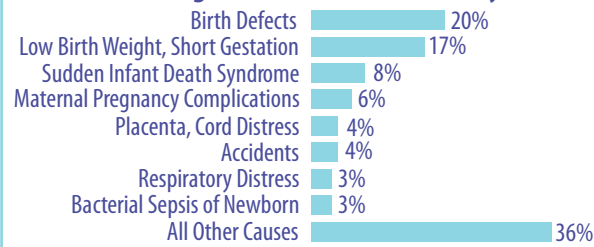
Infant Mortality Rate, by Region

(Per 1,000 Live Births, 5-Year Average, 2001-2005)



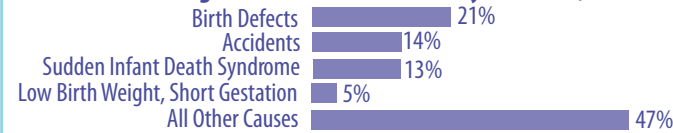
Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Leading Causes of Infant Mortality in U.S., 2004 Final



Source: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics Reports

Leading Causes of Infant Mortality in Alaska, 2001-2005



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

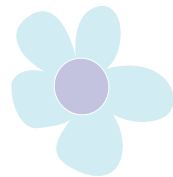
Endnotes for Infancy



1. Annie E. Casey Foundation, *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, page 36.
2. Robert L. Goldenberg and Jennifer F. Culhane, "Low Birth Weight in the United States," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Volume 85, Number 2, February 2007, pages 584S-590S; and Population Reference Bureau, "Is Low Birth Weight a Cause of Problems, or a Symptom of Them?" Downloaded June 2007: <http://www.prb.org>.
3. The Future of Children, Volume 15, Number 1, Spring 2005, "Low Birth Weight and School Readiness," in *School Readiness: Closing Racial and Ethnic Gaps*. Downloaded September 2007: <http://www.futureofchildren.org/homepage2824/archive.htm>.
4. The Future of Children, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 1995, "The Role of Lifestyle in Preventing Low Birth Weight," in *Low Birth Weight*. Downloaded September 2007: <http://www.futureofchildren.org/homepage2824/archive.htm>.
5. United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization, *Low Birthweight: Country, Regional and Global Estimates*, UNICEF, New York, 2004. Downloaded September 2007: <http://www.childinfo.org/areas/birthweight/>.
6. The Future of Children, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 1995, "The Direct Cost of Low Birth Weight," in *Low Birth Weight*. Downloaded January 2008: <http://www.futureofchildren.org/homepage2824/archive.htm>.
7. See note 3.
8. Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Sylvia Allegretto, *The State of Working America 2006/2007*, Economic Policy Institute, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2007.
9. "Birth Defects Among Infants and Children in Alaska," *Title V Needs Assessment: Special Series Fact Sheet, Women's, Children's and Family Health*, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Volume 1, Number 11, March 2005.
10. T.J. Mathews, M.S., and Marian F. MacDorman, Ph.D., "Infant Mortality Statistics from the 2004 Period Linked Birth/Infant Death Data Set," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Volume 55, Number 14, revised June 13, 2007, National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, 2007.

Economic Well-Being



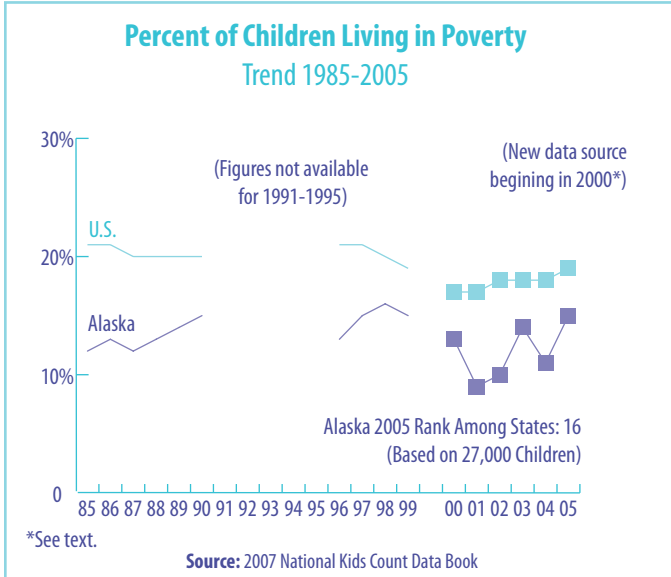


The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service describes the fur of sea otters as “some of the finest in the world,” and denser than that of any other mammal—up to one million hairs per square inch. That fur was so popular that commercial fur hunters—first Russian and then American—killed nearly all the sea otters along Alaska’s coast between 1740 and the early 1900s. Commercial hunting of sea otters was outlawed under an international treaty in 1911, and since 1972 Alaska’s sea otters have also been protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Only Alaska Natives are allowed to take sea otters, for subsistence or for use in handicrafts.

Today an estimated 70,000 sea otters—90% of the world’s population—live along areas of Alaska’s southwest, southcentral, and southeast coastline. But the population in southwest Alaska has dropped sharply—with no clear explanation—and in 2005 the federal government listed sea otters in southwest Alaska as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Adult sea otters weigh anywhere from 40 to 90 pounds, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates they require as much as one-quarter of their body weight in food per day. Shellfish and fish make up their diet—and they eat by floating on their backs, holding their food on their chests and using their forepaws to crack shells. This eating style makes them favorites of Alaskans and visitors touring coastal areas.

Sources of information: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/seaotters>); Alaska Department of Fish and Game (<http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/marine/seaotter.php>)



adult, involvement with crime, and poor health. The study's authors conclude, "At a minimum, the high costs that childhood poverty imposes on the U.S. imply that we should work hard to identify cost-effective strategies that reduce such poverty, and we should not hesitate to invest significant resources in such efforts when they are identified."¹

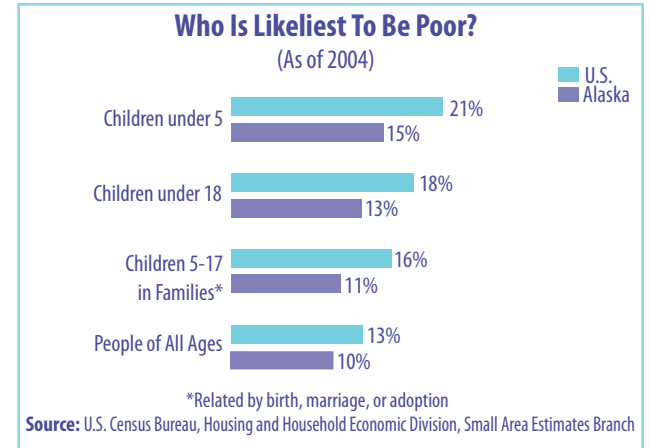
DATA

The trend graph makes it look as if there are dramatic annual shifts in the Alaska economy, causing the percentage of children living in poverty to fluctuate radically. But as is true for most statistics on Alaska, these percentages are based on a sample of a relatively small number of households. That means if the actual number of households below the poverty line increases or decreases slightly, there can appear to be large changes in the poverty rate.

The American Community Survey estimated that the percentage of children living in poverty increased slightly nationwide in 2005—to 19%. And while the Alaska percentages show a sharp increase, from 11% in 2004 to 15% in 2005, we should view those numbers with caution. In addition to the potential issues related to the small overall sample size in Alaska, the percentages may be affected by the fact that the American Community Survey is still establishing its sample in rural Alaska.

The bar graph at the top of the page shows that those most likely to be poor—in Alaska and nationwide—are the youngest children. Nationally, 21% of children under age 5 were poor in 2004, compared with 16% of those 5 through 17 and 13% among people of all ages. The percentages for Alaska follow the same pattern, with 15% of children under age 5 being poor, compared with 11% of those 5 through 17 and 10% among people of all ages.

Another measure of poverty is the share of school children qualifying for free lunches. Since 1946 the National School Lunch Program has provided free lunches to children from families with incomes below 130% of the poverty level. Children from families with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price lunches.



In the 2006-2007 school year, Alaska children from families of four with annual incomes below \$31,447 qualified for free lunches and those from families of four with incomes below \$44,752 qualified for reduced-price lunches. Unlike many other programs, the lunch program adjusts the qualifying income levels to reflect Alaska's higher cost of living. In addition to lunch, some schools also offer breakfast and snacks.

The pie chart on the next page shows the percentages of school children in Alaska receiving free or reduced-price meals in the 2006-2007 school year. Overall 39%, or 45,283 children, received free or reduced-price meals that year, compared with 38,620 (37%) in the 2004-2005 school year. The share receiving free meals increased from 27% in 2004-2005 to 31% in 2006-2007. The smallest percentages of participants were in the Unalaska (16%), Juneau (18%), and Skagway (20%) school districts and the highest were in the Lower Yukon (89%), Iditarod (87%), Yukon Flats (81%), and Southwest Region (81%) school districts.²

Meals at school not only save families money but also have the potential to improve nutrition among low-income students. A recent national study of lunches eaten by middle-school students found that children who ate mostly National School Lunch Program foods consumed more vitamins A and C, calcium, milk, fruits, and vegetables—and less sweetened beverages and candy—than their counterparts who ate from different sources, including

DEFINITION

The graph above shows the percentages of children under age 18 living below the federal poverty line in Alaska and nationwide. This poverty index was developed in the 1960s and was designed to measure a family's ability to afford basic necessities. The measure is updated annually to account for inflation, but it is not adjusted for differences in living costs around the country. The poverty threshold depends on the size of the family; in 2005, the threshold for a family of four was \$19,350. How well this index measures poverty has been debated for years, since spending patterns and other factors have changed sharply in the past 40 years. Still, it is in widespread use and allows for consistent comparisons among states. Since 2000, the source of these numbers has been the American Community Survey. We also include additional measures of poverty in this indicator.

SIGNIFICANCE

The link between growing up poor and doing poorly later in life is well documented. The Center for American Progress has estimated that, aside from the personal losses, poverty costs the U.S. economy \$500 billion a year. The center based this estimate on three consequences of childhood poverty: reduced earnings as an

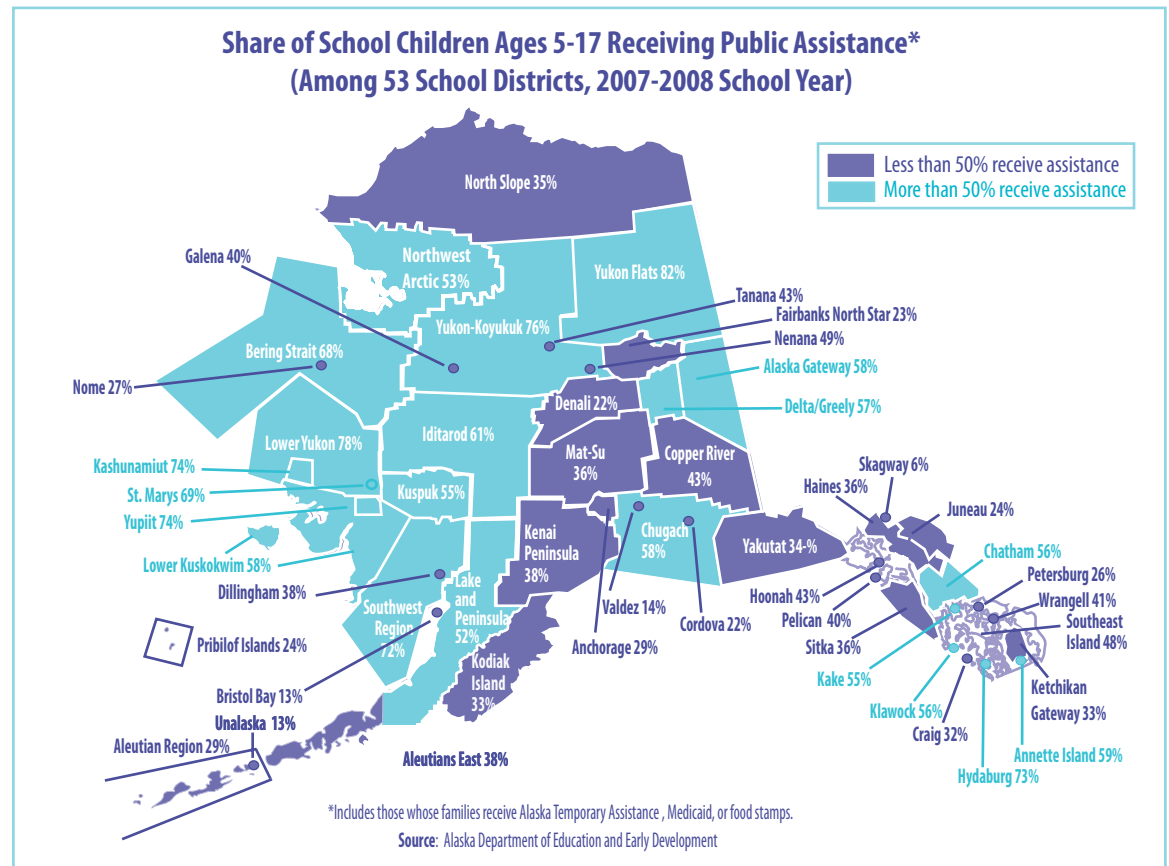
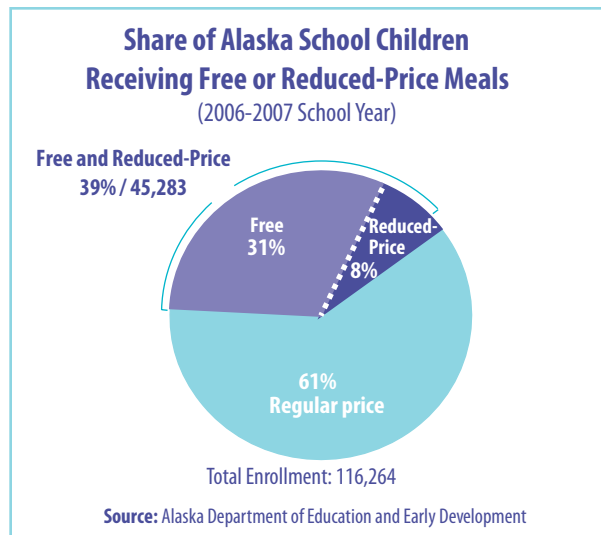
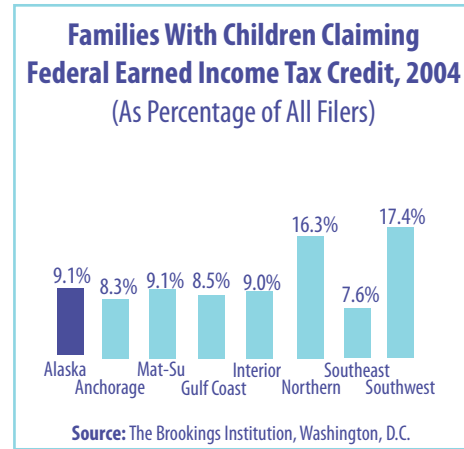
Children Living in Poverty (continued)

food brought from home or purchased from vending machines or fast-food places. But the study findings weren't all so encouraging: the students eating school lunches ate more calories, saturated fat, and sodium than others.³

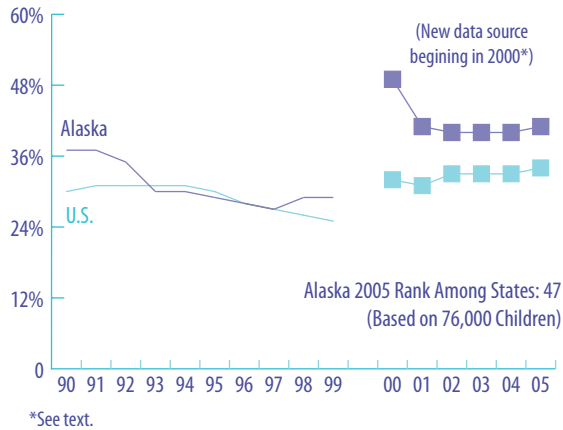
Still another indication of poverty among children is how many are from families receiving some form of public assistance. The map shows the share of children in each of Alaska's 53 school districts whose families receive either Alaska Temporary Assistance, Medicaid, or food stamps. The lighter-shaded districts are those where more than 50% of students come from households receiving public assistance. The highest rates are among children living in remote rural areas.

A final measure of poverty among children is living in families with incomes low enough to qualify them for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). That credit has been in place since 1975, and it's a way for low-income working families to obtain a credit toward the taxes they owe—that is, it reduces the tax bill for low-income families. Not only can families offset the taxes they owe, they can also receive any remaining credit as part of their tax refund.

So even families who don't owe taxes can benefit from the credit. As the figure to the right shows, over 9% of all Alaskans who filed taxes in 2004 were families with children claiming the credit. The regional percentage varied from under 8% in Anchorage to more than 17% in the Southwest region.⁴



Percent of Children Under Age 18 With No Parent Working Full-Time Trend 1990-2005



DEFINITION

This indicator reports the share of children under 18 in households where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. That means no parent worked at least 35 hours per week for 50 weeks in the 12 months before the survey. It includes children who live with both or only one parent, as well as children who don't live with either parent—because they are also likely to live in financially precarious situations. Since 2000, the data in this graph have come from the American Community Survey and are not comparable to data from earlier years.

SIGNIFICANCE

When parents don't have steady jobs or adequate incomes, their children face a host of problems. Because most health insurance comes through employers, these children are less likely to have insurance or to get health care. Nationally, 9% of children lack health insurance. But among children without a parent employed full-time, year-round, 15% don't have health insurance.⁵ Parents without full-time work are also less likely to have paid sick leave.

This lack of stable income and the resulting likelihood of being poor lead to many painful choices for parents—for example,

whether to stay home with a sick child and lose wages and possibly lose the job; whether to take a sick child to the doctor and incur medical bills; and whether to buy food or pay the rent.

DATA

The American Community Survey reports that in 2005 34% of American children under 18 were living in families where no parent had a full-time, year-round job, as the trend graph to the left shows.

Levels of full-time employment vary among single-parent and two-parent families, as the graph to the right shows. (The data in this figure are from a different source—the Current Population Survey—and use somewhat different definitions than the American Community Survey.) Full-time employment in all types of families has increased sharply since 1980, but children living with two parents are, not surprisingly, the most likely to have at least one parent working full time in 2005.

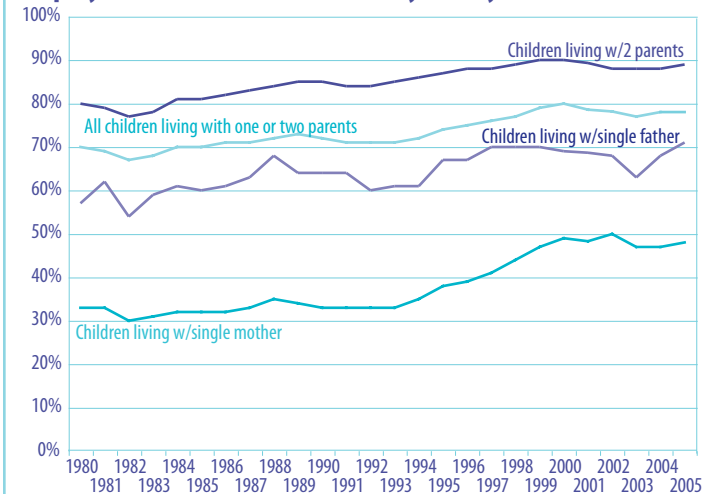
Among single-parent families, the share varied greatly between single-father families and single-mother families. More than 70% of children living with only their fathers had full-time working fathers; among single-mother families, only 48% of children had full-time working mothers. Whether children lived with one or both parents, 78.3% had at least one parent working year round, full time in 2005. The highest proportion was in 2000, when 80% of children had one or more parents employed.⁶

The share of children with fully employed parents also varies by race. Nationally in 2005, American Indian and Alaska Native children were twice as likely as White children to be in families where no parent had full-time, year-round work—53% compared with 27%.⁷

In Alaska, the share of children in families where no parent had full-time, year-round work was 41% in 2005, among the highest in the nation. But keep in mind that Alaska has the highest seasonal variation in workers in the U.S.⁸

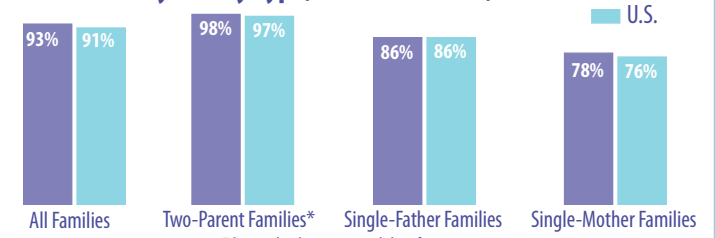
We also know, as the bar graph at the bottom of the page shows, that parents in Alaska—whether two-parent or single-parent families—are in the labor force at roughly the same rates as parents nationwide. The labor force includes not only those with jobs but also those looking for work.

Percentage of Children Under 18 Living With at Least One Parent Employed Year-Round, Full-Time, by Family Structure, 1980-2005



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements

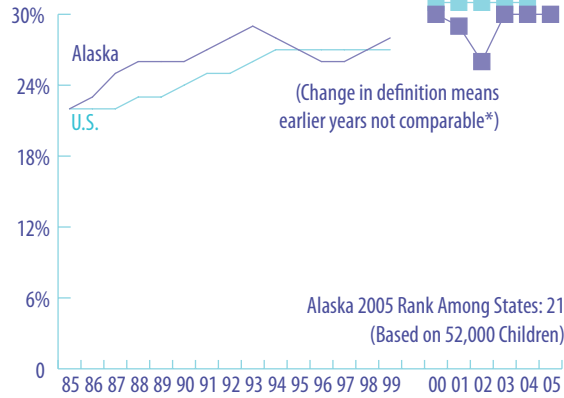
Parents in Labor Force by Family Type, Alaska and U.S., 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau data set: 2005 American Community Survey, Table B23008

Children in Single-Parent Households

**Percent of Children in Single-Parent Households
Trend 1985-2005**



*Before 2000, this indicator measured the percentage of families headed by single parents.

Source: 2007 National Kids Count Data Book

Alaska 2005 Rank Among States: 21
(Based on 52,000 Children)

- Three times as likely to be living in a household without a telephone
- Twice as likely to drop out of high school

These are generalities, of course, and circumstances certainly differ in individual families. Various studies have shown that children tend to do best when they are raised by two parents who have a good marriage. Some steps to lower the number of children growing up with just one parent would be to cut the teen birth rate and to find ways to encourage parents who don't live with their children to become more involved in their upbringing.¹⁰

DATA

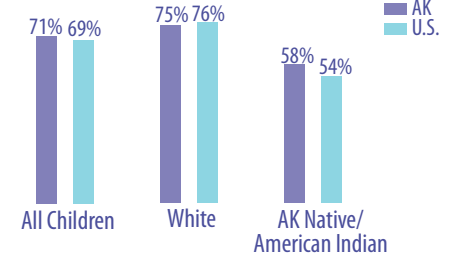
The proportion of children living in single-parent households—in Alaska and nationwide—has remained fairly constant over the past six years, as the trend graph shows.

In Alaska, 30% of children lived in single-parent families for four out of the past six years. Nationally, the picture isn't much different—31% of children lived in single-parent families in five out of the past six years.

There are large differences in percentages of children in single-parent households by race. Nationwide, Black children are most likely to live in single-parent families (65%), followed by American Indian and Alaska Native children (49%), non-Hispanic White children (23%), and Asian and Pacific Islander children (17%).¹¹

The bar graph compares the share of children living in two-parent families in Alaska and the U.S. as a whole in 2006. Overall, Alaska children are more likely to live in two-parent families than children nationwide—71% compared with 69%. Alaska Native and American Indian children are also slightly more likely to live in two-parent households in Alaska (58%) than nationwide (54%). Among White children, the Alaska and U.S. percentages were virtually the same—75% of children in Alaska and 76% of children nationwide.

**Children Living in Two-Parent Families by Race*
(2006)**



* All children includes those of mixed races. The other categories contain children of one race alone.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Table S0901

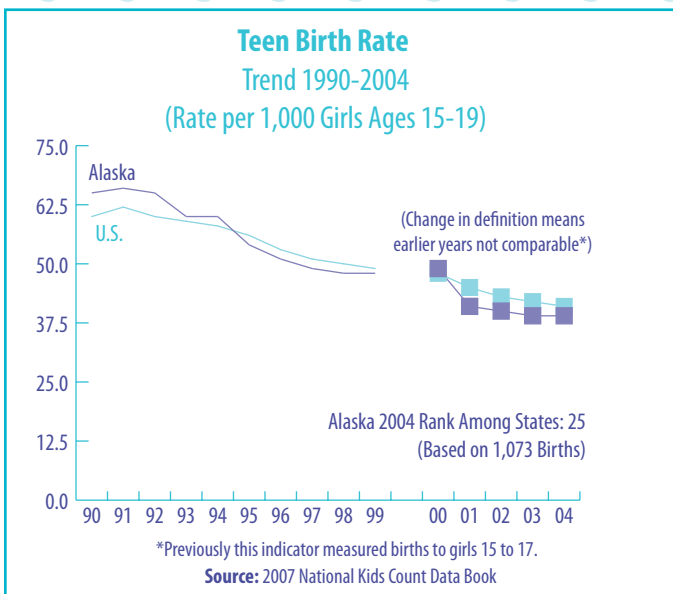
DEFINITION

This indicator, based on data collected for the American Community Survey, measures the percentage of children under age 18 (excluding the small number who have at some point been married) in households where their parents do not have spouses living in the home. Before 2000, this indicator measured the percentage of single-parent families and was from a different data source—the Current Population Survey.

SIGNIFICANCE

A 2003 report, *Recent Changes in the Percent of Children Living in Single-Mother Families*, enumerates the disadvantages faced by children growing up with just their mothers, compared with children living with both parents.⁹ It reports that relative to children in married-couple families, children in single-mother families are:

- Five times as likely to be poor
- Nearly twice as likely to be living in a family where the head of the household did not finish high school
- More than four times as likely to be living in a family where no parent has a full-time, year-round job
- Almost twice as likely to be without health insurance



DEFINITION

The teen birth rate is the number of births to girls 15 through 19, divided by the total number of girls 15 through 19. Until 2000 this indicator showed these rates only for girls 15 through 17—so numbers before and after 2000 are not comparable.

SIGNIFICANCE

Besides the personal, social, and financial costs teenage parents and their children bear, taxpayers also pay. A recent National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy report compares the costs when the mother is less than 20 years old to the same costs when the mother is 20 or 21 years old before having children.¹²

The estimated national cost to taxpayers of teen childbearing in 2004 was \$9.1 billion. This includes costs children of teen mothers incur because they use more public health care (\$1.9 billion), are more likely to be in foster care and child protective services (\$2.3 billion), and are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system (\$2.1 billion). The estimate also measures the participation of teen mothers in public assistance programs and includes estimates of lost tax revenue because of lower earnings over the lifetime of the mother, father, and child.

For Alaska, the estimated public costs of teenagers bearing children in 2004 were \$13 million for public health care, \$8 million for child welfare, and \$11 million for the criminal justice system.¹³

Teenagers who have babies also pose long-term consequences for American society—poorly educated workers who have fewer skills and less training and are more likely to need public help throughout their lives. Teenage parents are also less likely to add to national productivity; because of their lower earnings, they will pay less in taxes. So it's clear that reducing teen childbearing benefits both our state and national economies by decreasing the burden on taxpayers and increasing productivity.

DATA

New data on teen births was released while we were in the final stages of preparing this book, so some are preliminary and in other cases detailed breakdowns are not yet available. We discuss the newest data when possible.

The trend graph shows that the 2004 birth rate among Alaska teens remained the same as in 2003, while the national rate declined slightly. Even though the numbers in this graph aren't comparable over time—because numbers before 2000 didn't include girls 18 and 19—we can see that the teen birth rate has been dropping in Alaska and nationwide for the past 15 years. Recent figures show that since the early 1990s the teen birth rate has

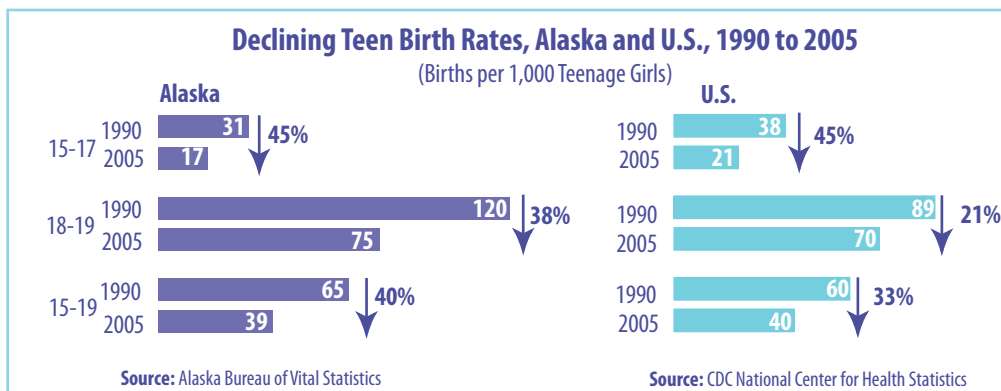
declined by one-third nationally and in Alaska by 40%. Most of that decline was among the younger girls.¹⁴

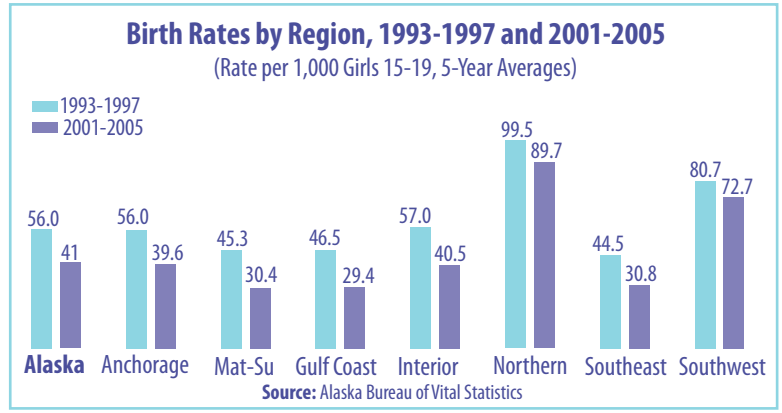
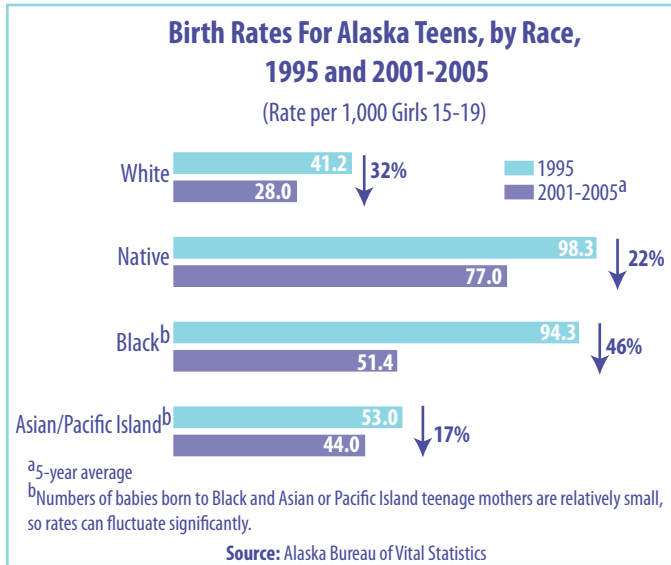
The bar graph below shows teen birth rates in Alaska and the entire country as of 2005 and the dramatic decline in those rates since 1990. In 2005 the birth rate was 17 births per 1,000 Alaska girls 15 to 17—down 45% from the 1990 rate of 31 per 1,000. Among Alaska girls 18 and 19, the 2005 rate was 75 births per 1,000 girls, down 38% from 120 per 1,000 in 1990.

Nationwide, the 2005 birth rate among girls 15 to 17 was 21 births per 1,000 girls, and the rate among girls 18 and 19 was 70 births per 1,000 girls. So the 2005 birth rate for younger girls in Alaska was below the national average, but the rate among girls 18 and 19 was higher.

The teen birth rate hasn't declined as fast in the most recent years, and preliminary 2006 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show the birth rate for American teens—ages 15 to 19—rising for the first time since 1991.¹⁵ That preliminary 2006 rate is 41.9 births per 1,000 girls, a 3% increase over the 2005 rate of 40.5—which was the lowest rate in the past 65 years. Broken down by age, the increase among girls 15 to 17 was 3%, and among girls 18 and 19 it was 4%.

The 2006 increase in birth rates was not only among teens. The rate among women in their 20s, 30s, and early 40s also increased 3%. This was the largest annual increase since 1989, and the largest number of births since 1961.¹⁶ As we write this, CDC has not yet released rates for individual states.





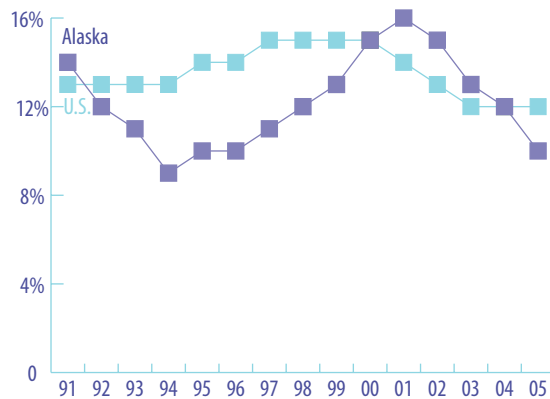
A recent publication sheds some light on the characteristics of Alaska’s teenage mothers and their babies. In 2004, 18% of teenagers who had babies were already mothers.¹⁷ That percentage was the same for the nation as a whole. Alaska also mirrored the 2004 national average in that 10% of all births were to girls under age 20. Babies of teenage mothers in Alaska are less likely to be born at low birth weight—7% in Alaska, compared with 10% nationwide in 2004.

Alaska’s teenage mothers are somewhat more likely to be married than teenage mothers nationwide—in 2004, 78% of Alaska teenagers who had babies were unmarried, compared with 83% nationwide.

The teen birth rate varies considerably by race, as the graph above shows. In every racial group in Alaska, the birth rates are lower than they were roughly ten years ago. The largest decrease was among Black teens; the birth rate dropped from 94 births per 1,000 girls in 1995 to 51 in the period 2001–2005—a 46% decline. Among White teens the birth rate dropped 32%, from 41 births per 1,000 girls to 28. The birth rate among Alaska Native girls remains the highest, at 77 births per 1,000 girls, but that was a decline of 22% since 1995. The birth rate among Asian girls was 17% lower in the 2001–2005 period than it was in 1995. Keep in mind, however, that because there are relatively few Black and Asian teenage girls in Alaska, their birth rates can fluctuate more dramatically from year to year.

Teen birth rates have also declined in every region in Alaska since the 1990s, but the regions with the highest rates then still have the highest rates now. During the period 2001–2005, the Northern region had a rate of almost 90 births per 1,000 teenage girls, and the Southwest had a rate of almost 73 births. The regions with the lowest birth rates during that period were the Gulf Coast (29.4), Mat-Su (30.4), and Southeast (30.8). The statewide five-year average was 41 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19.

Percent of Children Without Health Insurance* U.S. and Alaska, 1991-2005



* This source includes as “uninsured” children who are eligible to receive medical care through the Alaska Area Native Health Service.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey. Each year is the midpoint of a 3-year average.

DEFINITION

This indicator estimates the percentage of children, ages 18 and under, without health-care insurance. These numbers can be confusing because different sources use different definitions. For example, the trend graph at the top of this page shows that 10% of Alaska’s children don’t have insurance. But on the next page, where we talk about health-care coverage by type, there is a bar chart showing that 7% are without insurance. These two figures are both based on data collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS) of the U.S. Census Bureau. When the bureau publishes CPS data, it classifies Alaska Native children who are covered only by health services through the Alaska Area Native Health Service as being “uninsured.” While these children do not technically have health “insurance,” they do have access to medical care. So when the American Academy of Pediatrics uses the CPS data, it adjusts the figures to count these children as insured. That reduces the percentage of uninsured children in Alaska.

Another thing to keep in mind when using CPS numbers is that they probably underestimate the number of children without

insurance. The CPS measure of “uninsured” includes only those who lacked coverage for the entire year before the survey—so children who were insured for only a small portion of the year are counted as having insurance.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children without health insurance are less likely to have a regular source of medical care, may not have had a dental or eye exam in the past year, and may not have been screened for developmental delays. Their parents are less likely to have had access to health care for their children when they needed it.

And it’s not always safe to assume that families with health insurance have affordable and accessible health care. There may be a long waiting period before coverage begins; pre-existing conditions may not be covered; deductibles and co-payments may not be affordable; and, especially in Alaska, travel to get care can be expensive. Also, when American workers change jobs, they typically can’t take their insurance with them; when people lose jobs, they often lose their health insurance. That’s not true in a number of other countries, where health-care coverage is independent of a person’s current job.

Most people in the U.S. are covered by employer-based insurance, but the federal and state governments also provide health-care coverage for specific groups, including the elderly and the poor. The traditional program for the poor is Medicaid, for people at or below the poverty level.

But in 1997—in response to rising health-care and health-insurance costs—the federal government created an extension of Medicaid, for children whose families earn too much for coverage under the Medicaid guidelines but too little to afford private insurance. It’s called the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Denali KidCare is Alaska’s version of this program. The federal and state governments share the cost.¹⁸

A three-year study of children in California’s SCHIP program, similar to Alaska’s Denali KidCare, interviewed families at the time of enrollment, after one year, and after two years in the

program. The study demonstrated that children enrolled in SCHIP were getting more of the care they needed and also found statistically significant links to better “health-related quality of life,” based on reports from both parents and children. The study also documented that the program reduced disparities in care among racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups.¹⁹

We also know that a growing number of working families are uninsured. A nationally representative survey conducted in late 2005 by the Commonwealth Institute found that 67% of the 48 million adults in the U.S. who had been uninsured at some point in the prior year lived in families where at least one adult worked full time.²⁰ The share of adults (19 to 64) with moderate incomes (\$20,000–\$40,000 a year) who had been uninsured at some time during the prior year rose from 28% in 2001 to 41% in 2005.

The survey also found that the uninsured with chronic conditions such as diabetes or asthma were more likely than the insured to skip medications and to use the emergency room for treatment. Specifically, 59% of uninsured adults with chronic conditions had skipped medications or didn’t have prescriptions filled because they couldn’t afford it.

Adults without consistent coverage are also less likely to get preventive care. Those who were insured for the full year before the survey were twice as likely to have had dental exams in the prior year than those who were not insured at the time of the survey. The uninsured are also more likely to get inefficient care. The survey found that twice as many of the uninsured had duplicate tests, and that 23% of the uninsured, compared with 15% among the insured, arrived at scheduled appointments to find that test results and medical records weren’t available.

Increasing numbers of adults have medical debts that exhaust their savings and make it difficult or impossible to pay for needed care, to manage chronic conditions, to get preventive care, and to buy necessities. Among uninsured respondents, 51% reported having debt problems. Nearly half of those had used all their savings to pay medical bills, and about 40% weren’t able to pay for food, heat, or rent because of medical bills.

Health-Care Coverage (continued)

DATA

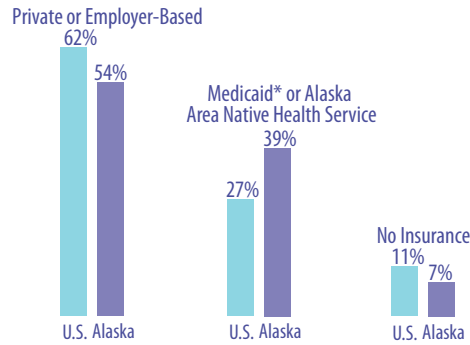
The next several graphs show health-care coverage by type and by poverty level. According to the Current Population Survey, one of every twelve children in the U.S. and one of every ten children in Alaska do not have health insurance. (See trend graph on previous page.)

But when CPS figures are adjusted to include Alaska Native children with coverage through the Alaska Area Native Health Service as “insured,” the share of Alaska children without insurance drops to 7%, as the bar chart to the right shows. That chart also shows that children in Alaska are less likely to be covered by private insurance and more likely to be covered under government-funded programs than children nationwide.

The table shows types of health-care coverage in more detail. It is not a breakdown specifically for children, but it gives the broad picture of coverage for Alaskans and other Americans. It shows that most Alaskans (adults and children combined) are covered by private insurance, but the share is smaller than it is nationwide—less than 64%, compared with nearly 70%. Alaskans are also, because of the large military presence in the state, more likely to be covered by military insurance. Fewer Alaskans are covered by Medicare, the federal program for older people, because Alaska’s over-65 population is smaller than it is nationwide (although it has been growing very rapidly in recent years). Alaskans are somewhat more likely to be covered by Medicaid.

The adjacent bar and pie charts shed additional light on private health-care coverage among Alaskans. They are based on data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey of 2005. Again we see the pattern of fewer private firms in Alaska offering health insurance—42% compared with 56% nationwide. But among large firms in both Alaska and around the country, almost all offer insurance. It is in small firms (those with 50 or fewer employees) where the difference is striking. Just 27% of small firms in Alaska offer insurance, compared with 43% nationwide.

Health Care Coverage for Children (18 and Under), Alaska and U.S. (Average, 2003–2005)



*Includes Denali KidCare

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, based on Current Population Survey

Health-Care Coverage, Alaska and U.S., Average 2004–06

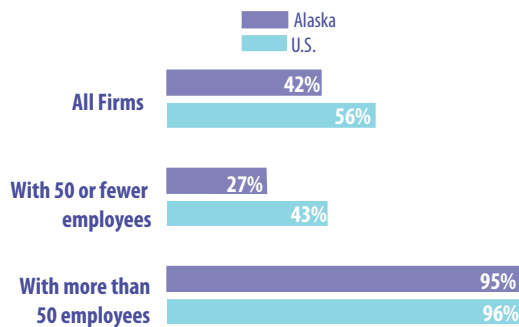
	Private Insurance	Medicaid	Medicare	Military	IHS only*	None
Alaska	63.5%	14.6%	8.2%	12.8%	4.2%	12.5%
U.S.	69.5%	13.0%	13.6%	3.7%	N/A	15.3%

Note: Totals add to more than 100% because some people have more than one type of coverage.

* U.S. Census Bureau figures classify people who receive care through the Indian Health Service as “uninsured.” Based on a study by the University of Minnesota in the late 1990s, we estimated the share covered by IHS only and removed them from the uninsured category.

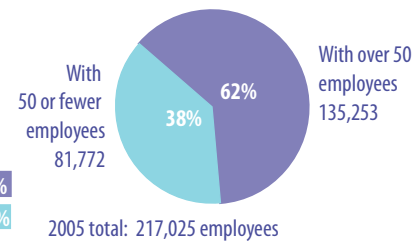
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

Private Firms Offering Health Insurance,* Alaska and U.S., 2005



* Not all workers at firms that offer insurance carry that insurance.

How Many Alaskans Work for Small Firms?



2005 total: 217,025 employees

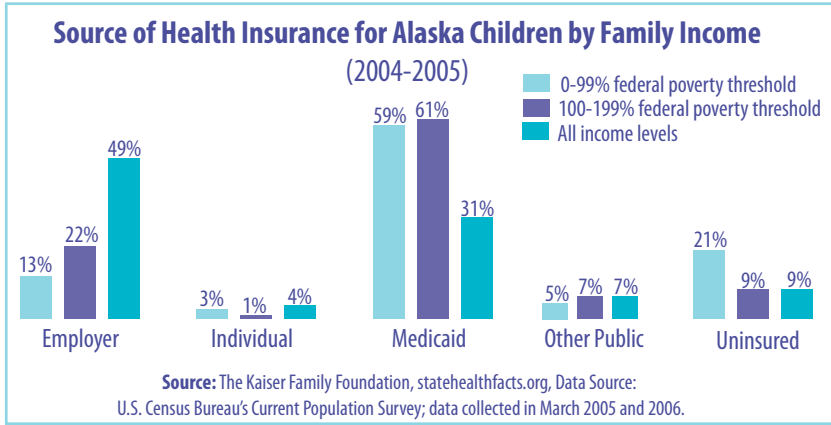
Source: Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2005

Alaska has a long history of employment that fluctuates with the seasons. In fact, Alaska has the highest seasonal change in private jobs of any state in the U.S.²¹ Fishing, construction, mining, and tourism are seasonal industries. Jobs that provide employment part time, or full time for only part of the year, are less likely to offer health insurance. This seasonal employment means that people in Alaska are less likely to have the kinds of jobs that provide health insurance for them and their families.

Health-care coverage children receive, or don’t receive, varies widely by income, as the figures on the facing page show.

The bar chart showing sources of insurance, prepared by the Kaiser Foundation with CPS data, is based on just two years of data. Because of the small size of the CPS sample in Alaska, we usually try to provide data averaged for at least a three-year period. The information is interesting and relevant, so we are including it here—but it is best to consider the general pattern shown rather than the exact numbers.

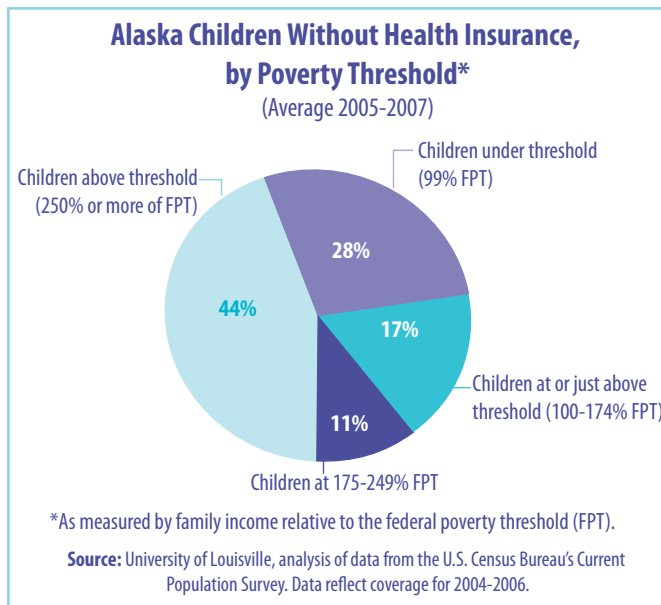
The figure shows that very few children from families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold have employer-based or private insurance, and close to one-quarter are uninsured. Even among those from families with incomes up to double the poverty level, less than one-quarter have employer-based insurance, and around one in ten is uninsured. About 60% of children from families with incomes between 100% and 199% of the poverty threshold are covered by Medicaid.



Including Alaska children from all incomes levels, roughly half have employer-based insurance, more than a third are covered by Medicaid or other public insurance, and nearly 10% are uninsured. Keep in mind that in this figure, children covered only by the Indian Health Service are counted as uninsured.²²

The pie chart breaks out uninsured children in Alaska in relation to the poverty threshold. As of 2007, all uninsured children living in families with incomes below 175% of the poverty threshold are eligible for Denali KidCare.²³ That includes 45% of the children shown in the pie chart (the sum of children at the poverty level and those below 175% of the poverty level). For a variety of reasons—including parents' lack of information about the program and the social stigma some people associate with a program for the poor—not all children who are eligible for Denali KidCare are actually enrolled.

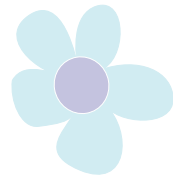
About 11% of uninsured children live in families with incomes between 175% and 249% of the poverty threshold. In a series of focus groups the Institute of Social and Economic Research held in Alaska in the winter of 2006-2007, a number of participants reported that their incomes were a little too high to qualify for public programs, but not high enough to pay for insurance.²⁴ Many said that they'd like to see Medicaid and Denali KidCare opened to uninsured Alaskans with higher incomes, with payment on a sliding scale.



1. Harry J. Holzer, Diane W. Schanzenbach, Greg J. Duncan, and Jens Ludwig, "The Economic Costs of Poverty in the United States: Subsequent Effects of Children Growing Up Poor." Center for American Progress, January 24, 2007.
2. Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Free and Reduced-Price Meal Report, 2006-2007. Retrieved August 2007: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/CNS/NSLP.html>.
3. Karen Cullen, Kathy Watson, and Issa Zakeri, *Middle School Student Lunch Consumption: Impact of National School Lunch Program Meal and Competitive Foods*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Contractor and Cooperator Report Number 30, June 2007. Retrieved August 2007: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/CCR30/>.
4. There were roughly 11,000 more tax returns filed in Alaska in 2004 than in 2003, and 2,200 more filers who claimed the EITC—but the increase in EITC claimants was primarily among those without children.
5. Annie E. Casey Foundation, *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, page 50.
6. *Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*. Based on data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements.
7. See note 5.
8. Rosylind Frazier and Virgene Hanna, "No Health Insurance: How Do Alaskans Cope?" *Understanding Alaska Research Summary*, No. 9, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, December 2007.
9. William O'Hare, "Recent Changes in the Percent of Children Living in Single-Mother Families," *A KIDS COUNT Working Paper*, July 2003, Annie E. Casey Foundation.
10. Kristin Anderson Moore, Ph.D., "Family Structure and Child Well-Being," talk presented to The Children's Rights Council, Washington, D.C., July 17, 2003, Child Trends.
11. Annie E. Casey Foundation, *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, page 54.
12. Saul Hoffman, *By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing*. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Washington, D.C., October 2006.
13. *By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in Alaska*. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Washington, D.C., November 2006.
14. *Facts At A Glance: A fact sheet reporting national, state-level, and city-level trends in teen childbearing*. Publication #2007-12, Child Trends, Washington, D.C., June 2007.
15. B.E. Hamilton, J.A. Martin, S.J. Ventura, "Births: Preliminary Data for 2006." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 56, No. 7, 2007, National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD.
16. See note 15.
17. See note 14.
18. Originally, Alaska's program covered children in families whose incomes were below 200% of the federal poverty level. In 2003, the Alaska legislature lowered the income guideline from 200% to 175% of the poverty level and at the same time froze the income guideline at the 2003 level. Those 2003 changes meant that by 2007 the income limit had decreased to 154% of the poverty level. In 2007 the Alaska Legislature returned the income guideline for Denali KidCare to 175% of the federal poverty level and pegged it to follow inflation. That 2007 legislative change means that about 1,300 more children are again eligible for coverage. For more information, see Jennifer Sullivan and Rachel Klein, *SCHIP Reauthorization: What's at Stake for Alaska? Families USA*, Washington, D.C. Retrieved April 2008: <http://familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/aslaska-schip.pdf>, May 2007.
19. Michael Seid, James W. Varni, Lesley Cummings, and Mattias Schonlau. "The Impact of Realized Access to Care on Health-Related Quality of Life: A Two-Year Prospective Cohort Study of Children in the California State Children's Health Insurance Program," *The Journal of Pediatrics*, Vol. 149, No 3, September 2006.
20. S. R. Collins, K. Davis, M. M. Doty, J. L. Kriss, and A.L. Holmgran, "Gaps in Health Insurance: An All-American Problem," *The Commonwealth Fund*, Volume 16, April 2006, New York.
21. See note 8.
22. The Kaiser Family Foundation, statehealthfacts.org. Data sources: Urban Institute and Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured; estimates based on the Census Bureau's March 2005 and 2006 Current Population Survey. Retrieved August 2007 August 2007: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/compare-bar.jsp?ind=128&cat=3 and ind=129&cat=3>.
23. See note 18.
24. See note 8.

Education





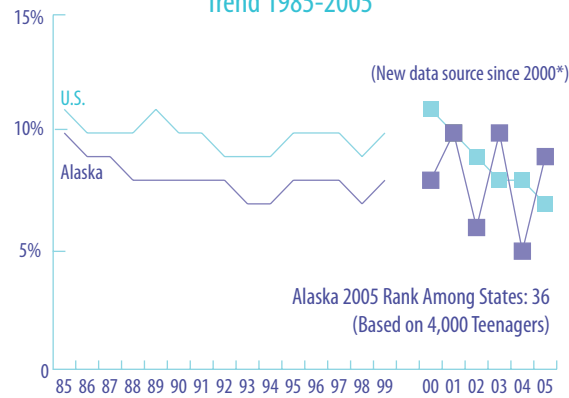
Alaska's official state bird may be the ptarmigan—but it's the raven, more than any other bird, that has made itself at home in Alaska. The raven lives everywhere, eats anything, and survives any temperature. It is a songbird—the world's largest species of songbird—but as an Alaska biologist has pointed out, "When the swallows, sandpipers, and warblers have fled" for the winter, the ravens stay. They have a deep, raucous caw that everyone who lives in Alaska has heard—but the Alaska Department of Fish and Game reports that ravens in fact have "more than 30 distinct vocalizations."

Ravens are black and are typically from 22 to 27 inches long, with wingspans twice that size. They soar high and their aerial acrobatics are a joy to see. They prey on mice and other small animals, but they are above all opportunistic and can also find treasure anywhere—from kills of other animals to garbage dumpsters. Ravens are smart, bold, and tough. Alaska's Native people have historically recognized those qualities in the raven, and it not surprising that the raven is a major figure in Alaska Native culture and mythology. Ravens can be maddening—as anyone who has picked up garbage after a raven-onslaught can testify—but whether you love them or not, their resourcefulness commands respect.

Sources of information: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (<http://www.adfg.state.ak.us> and www.wildlife.alaska.gov); Alaska Trekker (<http://www.alaskatrekker.com>)



Percent of Teens (16-19) Who Are High-School Dropouts Trend 1985-2005



(New data source since 2000*)

Alaska 2005 Rank Among States: 36
(Based on 4,000 Teenagers)

*See text.

Source: 2007 National Kids Count Data Book

was enrolled in the district at some time during the school year whose enrollment terminated. Dropouts do not include graduates, transfers to public or private schools, or transfers to state- or district-approved education programs. Students who are absent due to suspension, illness, or medical conditions are not reported as dropouts.” DEED’s calculations include students who are enrolled in grades 7 through 12 in October of a given school year but who drop out before the end of the year.

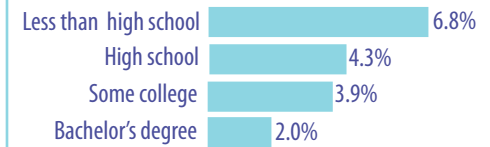
Looking at graduation rates, we use measurements from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and DEED. NCES uses the “averaged freshman graduation rate,” based on the percentage of freshmen in a given class who graduate four years later. DEED calculates the share of students graduating in a given class by incorporating the number of dropouts each year from grades 9 through 12.²

SIGNIFICANCE

Completing high school is a necessary step toward becoming a self-sufficient adult—and those who don’t graduate face serious financial and social consequences. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the median yearly income of high-school dropouts in the U.S. was about \$20,200 in 2006. Those with even slightly more education (a high-school diploma or a GED) earned nearly one-third more, or about \$30,200 a year.³ Those who go on to college can potentially earn several times what dropouts earn.

Besides a staggering loss in wages, Americans who fail to finish high school are also likely to experience poorer health, higher unemployment, greater need for public assistance, and an increased likelihood of going to jail.⁴ The bar chart demonstrates that for every additional level of schooling, Americans have a lower unemployment rate. In 2006, the unemployment rate for Americans without high-school diplomas was 6.8%.⁵ Those who finished high school but didn’t go to college had an unemployment rate of 4.3% in 2006, while about 3.9% of those with some college were unemployed. Only 2% of those with bachelor’s degrees were out of work.

U.S. Unemployment Rate by Education Level, 2006



Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

DROP-OUT MEASURES

As the trend graph to the left shows, the percentage of Alaska teens (16-19) who dropped out of high school varied considerably between 2000 and 2005. In 2005, Alaska’s drop-out rate of 9% was higher than the national rate of 7% and ranked Alaska 36th among the states. We expect the fluctuations in this drop-out rate to become less dramatic as the American Community Survey increases its sample size in rural Alaska.

Alaska’s DEED reports drop-out rates for a larger age range of teens than the American Community Survey does. This indicator is based on the number of students enrolled in grades 7 through 12 in the public schools. A total of 63,132 students were enrolled in those grades during the 2005-2006 school year in Alaska, and 3,642—or 5.8%—dropped out.

The bar chart on the next page shows the share of enrollment and the share of dropouts by race in grades 7 through 12 in the 2005-2006 school year, as well as the drop-out rates by race. Alaska Natives made up about 25% of students but nearly 37% of those who dropped out. Black and Hispanic students made up much smaller shares of enrollment (about 4% to 5%) but about 5% to 6% of dropouts. On the other hand, White, Asian and Pacific Island, and mixed-race students made up smaller shares of dropouts than of enrollment.

The map showing drop-out rates by region of Alaska in the 2005-2006 year is also based on information from DEED. Rates were lowest in the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions and highest in the Northern, Southwest, and Interior regions.

DEFINITIONS

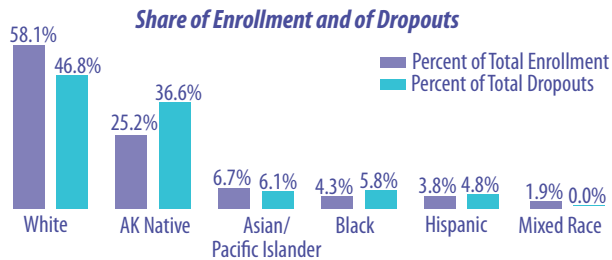
Methods for measuring both the share of teenagers who drop out of school and the share who graduate have proliferated recently. Here we report data from two sources that define “dropouts” differently and two sources that measure high-school graduation rates differently. We use those various sources to help us better understand why so many teenagers don’t finish high school—and to help identify possible ways of keeping more in school.

The American Community Survey, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, tabulates dropouts as the percentage of teenagers 16 through 19 who are not enrolled in high school and have not graduated. Those who have earned general equivalency diplomas (GEDs) are considered graduates and are not counted as dropouts. This is the source the national Kids Count Data Book uses, and the data are shown in the trend graph at the top of this page. This is also known as a “status” drop-out rate and is the measure used by the U.S. Department of Education.¹ It is a consistent measure, comparable across states and over time.

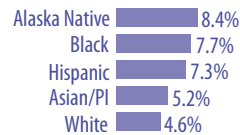
The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) uses a different definition of dropout: “A student who

Teens Who Drop Out (continued)

Share of Enrollment and of Dropouts (Grades 7-12) by Race (2005-2006)



Drop-out Rate



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Drop-out rates in the Southwest, Gulf Coast, and Anchorage regions changed little from those in the previous school year. The Northern region saw an increase from 6.5% to 7.5%. Rates decreased in the Interior (from 7.8% to 6.7%), the Mat-Su Borough (from 6.1% to 5.2%), and Southeast (from 5.4% to 4.1%). Alaska's overall drop-out rate declined slightly between 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, from 6% to 5.8%.

HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION MEASURES

The only measure of high-school graduation rates that is comparable across states is from the National Center for Education Statistics, which uses the "averaged freshman graduation rate" described earlier. This is the measure the U.S. Department of Education uses. The line graph shows that in the 2003-2004 school year, the averaged graduation rate among public high-school students was 74% nationwide and just over 67% in Alaska. These are the most recent figures available from NCES.

Sixteen states had graduation rates above 80% in the 2003-2004 year, and Nebraska had the highest rate, at 87.6%. Nine states had rates lower than Alaska's. Over the period from the 2000-2001 to 2003-2004, the graduation rate increased in 44 states and decreased in 5—including Alaska.⁶

More recent graduation figures are available from Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development—but remember that DEED calculates graduation rates differently. DEED's figures show that 7,361 (or 60%) of Alaska's high-school seniors graduated with a regular high-school diploma during 2005-2006. That figure incorporates the number of dropouts each year from grades 9 through 12.

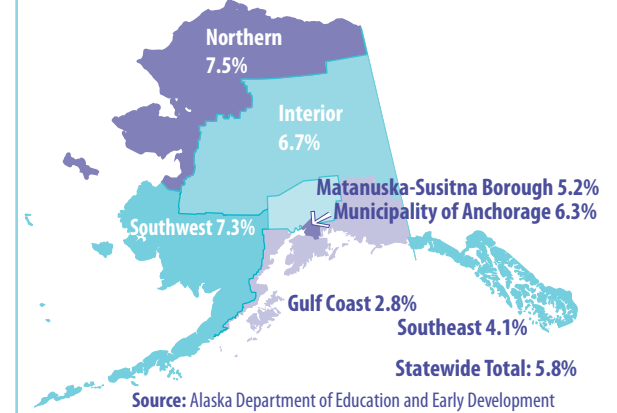
The first figure on the facing page shows 2006 graduation rates among Alaska students by race, sex, and other characteristics, while the figure below it compares shares of enrollment and shares of graduates by race.

There is a large gap in graduation rates among students of different races, with about 68% of White students graduating in 2006, compared with 45% among Alaska Native students. But the rates among Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanic students all increased 2 percentage points over rates in the previous school year. And while the graduation rate among Asian and Pacific Islander students remained the same, the rate among Whites declined by 3 percentage points, from 71% to 68%.

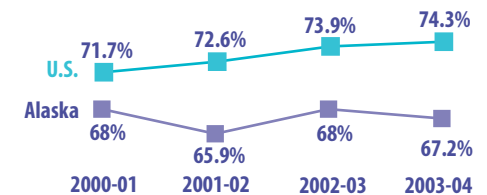
Alaska girls are more likely to graduate from high school than boys—63% compared with 57% in 2006. Students who have disabilities, speak limited English, or are from low-income families graduate at rates substantially below the statewide average of 60%. Fewer than half the students from low-income families graduated in 2006, and only around 40% of those with disabilities or limited ability to speak English got their diplomas.

The second bar chart on the facing page shows the racial and ethnic differences between enrollment and graduation among 12th-graders in 2005-2006. Ideally, the proportion of enrollment would be the same as the proportion of graduates—in other words, all the students who enrolled would actually graduate.

Percentage of Dropouts (Grades 7-12), by Region, 2005-2006



High-School Graduation Rates,* Alaska and U.S. Average

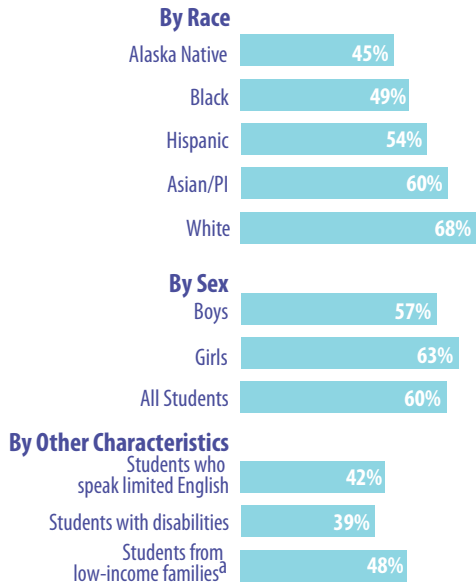


*The number of graduates divided by the estimated count of freshmen four years earlier.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

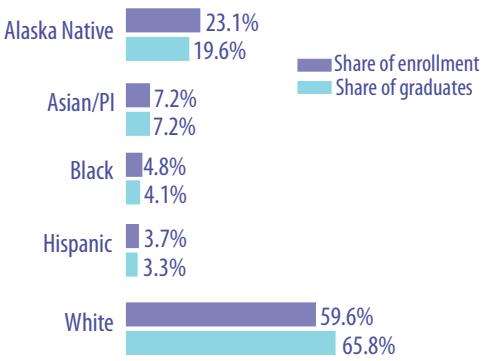
But we can see that White students made up a considerably larger share of graduates than of enrollment—about 60% of enrollment but 66% of graduates. Among Asian and Pacific Island students, the shares of enrollment and graduates were in fact the same—7.2%. Among other groups, the share of graduates fell short of their share of enrollment.

Graduation Rates Among Alaska Students, 2006



^a "Low-income" as measured by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch
Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Share of Enrollment and of Graduates (Grade 12), by Race, 2005-2006



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

DEFINITION

This indicator monitors teenagers 16 through 19 who are not in school (either part- or full-time), not in the military, and not working (either part- or full-time). Both high-school dropouts and those with general equivalency diplomas who are not working or on active military duty are included. The data since 2000 are from the American Community Survey.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is an important time in adolescent life: the start of the transition to adult life. It can be a difficult process even for those adolescents who have lots of support and resources available to them. But for teenagers who don't have the skills and the support they need, the prospect can be daunting.

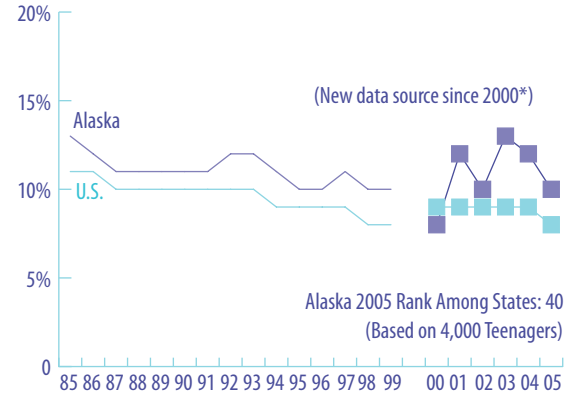
Teenagers who are not attending school nor working are sometimes referred to as "idle" or "disconnected," because they aren't spending their days in activities that will help them become productive adults—they are disconnected from adults and community networks. They are also more likely to be from families living in poverty. A recent study found that 31% of all children in Alaska lived in low-income families, while 44% of disconnected teens came from such families. About 1 in 5 teens from families in the lowest income bracket are not enrolled in school or working, compared with just 1 in 33 teens from families in the highest income bracket.⁷

A Hewlett Foundation report identified those least likely to make a successful transition to adulthood: (1) high-school dropouts; (2) those who have been in the juvenile justice system or foster care; and (3) teenage parents, especially mothers.⁸ These teenagers don't have—and face major challenges trying to get—the educational and vocational skills and social support they need.

DATA

In 2005 the share of Alaska's teens 16 to 19 who were not employed or attending school declined to 10%, down from 13% in 2003. Still, Alaska has more idle teens than the 2005 national average of 8% and ranks 40th among the states on this indicator.

**Teens (16-19) Not in School and Not Working
Trend 1985-2005**



Source: 2007 National Kids Count Data Book
 Alaska 2005 Rank Among States: 40 (Based on 4,000 Teenagers)
 *See text.

We don't have reliable breakdowns of disconnected teens by sex and race for Alaska, but the table below shows these breakdowns for the nation as a whole in 1996 and 2005. The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics found that the share of disconnected teens in all groups declined during this ten-year period. The largest decline (27%) was among teenage girls; this may reflect the increasing rate of girls graduating from high school and college. Among Hispanic teenagers the disconnected share dropped 25% and among Black teenagers 20%. Still, both Hispanic and Black teenagers remain more than twice as likely as White teens to be disconnected.

Percentages of U.S. Teenagers (16-19) Not in School and Not Working, 1996 and 2005

	1996	2005	Change
All 16-19	9%	8%	-11%
Teenage Girls	11%	8%	-27%
Teenage Boys	8%	7%	-13%
White Teenagers	7%	6%	-14%
Black Teenagers	15%	12%	-20%
Hispanic Teenagers	16%	12%	-25%

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

School Achievement

DEFINITION

State law requires the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to conduct statewide student testing to assess academic skills and knowledge among school children. DEED's student assessments include developmental profiles for kindergartners or first graders, standards-based assessments in third through tenth grades, national norm-referenced testing of fifth and seventh graders, and a High School Graduation Qualifying Exam students must pass to receive high school diplomas. Here we discuss three measures of student achievement: the California Achievement Test, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and Alaska's High School Graduation Qualifying Exam.

The California Achievement Test, 6 (TerraNova, version 2), is a widely-used exam that assesses academic achievement in reading, math, and language arts. It is a norm-referenced test—meaning it shows how students in Alaska compare with students across the nation. During the 2005-2006 school year, the CAT/6 was administered to fifth and seventh graders across Alaska.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—also called the Nation's Report Card—measures academic achievement in reading and mathematics every two years among a representative sample of fourth and eighth graders. NAEP scores allow states to (1) assess how their students' skills compare with those of students nationwide; (2) compare how groups of students are doing academically; and (3) track state progress over time.

Passing Alaska's High School Graduation Qualifying Exam is a prerequisite for obtaining a high-school diploma. The test assesses reading, writing, and math skills and is first administered in tenth grade. Students who fail the first time can continue to take the test until they pass or until graduation time. Those who don't pass receive a certificate of attendance instead of a diploma.

BACKGROUND

During the 2005-2006 academic year, 133,288 students were enrolled in more than 500 public schools in 53 school districts across Alaska. The bar chart shows at the top right shows that



Alaska's student body is mainly White (56%) and Alaska Native (24%). The remaining 20% of students are from other minorities. But Alaska Natives and other minorities make up a much bigger share of public school children in Alaska now than they did 20 years ago—up from 32% in 1988 to 44% by 2007.

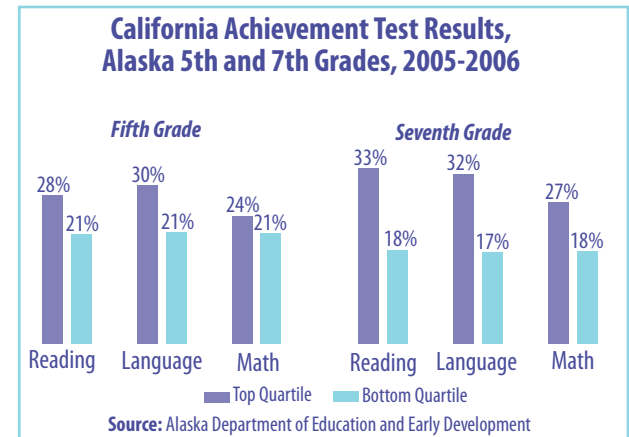
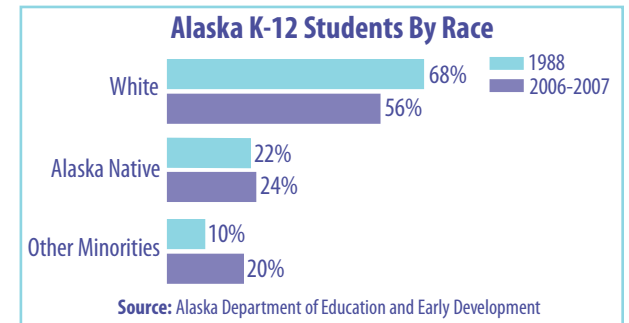
Spending per pupil averaged \$10,768 in 2005-2006. Approximately 39% of Alaska's students received free or reduced-price lunches that year—an indicator of the level of poverty among school children.

CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST

The CAT/6 scores of all students who took the test in 2006 are divided into four quartiles—meaning 25% score in the top (or highest-scoring) quartile, 25% in the bottom (or lowest-scoring quartile), and the remaining 50% of students score in the middle two quartiles. We can compare the distribution of scores among Alaska's school children to the national distribution, where exactly 25% of scores fall into each quartile. Therefore, if more than 25% of Alaska children score in the top quartile on a given test, and fewer than 25% score in the bottom quartile, we can conclude that Alaska students scored above the U.S. average.

Alaska's fifth and seventh graders did in fact score higher than the national averages in reading and language arts on the CAT/6 in the 2005-2006 school year. Among fifth graders, 28% scored in the top quartile on the reading section of the test, and among seventh graders 33% scored in the top quartile. On the other hand, only 21% of fifth graders and 18% of seventh graders scored in the bottom quartile in reading. Scores of Alaska's students on the language arts section of the test were similar.

In math, Alaska's seventh graders once again beat the national averages, with 27% scoring in the top quartile and only 18% in the bottom quartile. Among fifth graders, only 24% scored in the top quartile—putting them slightly below the national average—but they did better than the average in the bottom quartile, with just 21% scoring at that level.

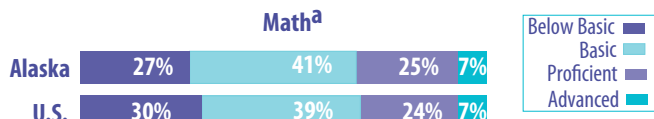


NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

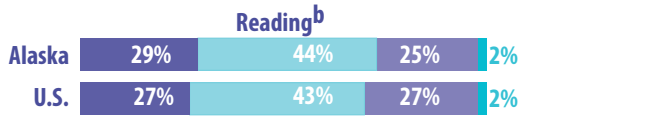
The National Assessment of Educational Progress tests reading and math skills. In both sections of the test, NAEP calculates an "average scale score," ranging from 0 to 500 points. These scores are used to determine the percentage of students falling into four achievement levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. The basic achievement level is considered the minimum standard students should be able to meet. The NAEP results can be compared over time and across states.

The first figure on the facing page shows the percentages of eighth graders in Alaska and nationwide scoring at the various levels in the 2007 assessments. The table next to it details the percentages of Alaska fourth and eighth graders in various groups scoring at least "basic" in the 2007 assessments.

NAEP Achievement Levels, Grade 8, Alaska and U.S., 2007



^aOn scale of 0-500 points, Below Basic= 261 or below; Basic= 262-298; Proficient= 299-332; Advanced= 333 or above



^bOn scale of 0-500 points, Below Basic= 242 or below; Basic= 242-280; Proficient= 281-322; Advanced= 323 or above

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress

Alaska's eighth graders scored slightly better than the national average in math in 2007, with a smaller share of students at the below-basic level—27% in Alaska compared with 30% nationwide. But in reading the opposite was true: Alaska had 29% of students at the below-basic level, compared with 27% nationwide.

Those 2007 math results for Alaska were somewhat better than in 2005, with 73% of eighth graders scoring at the basic level or higher, compared with the previous 69%. In reading, the 71% scoring at the basic level or higher was about the same as in 2005.

The table above shows the shares of various groups of Alaska fourth and eighth graders scoring at least at the basic level on the 2007 NAEP. There's variation among the groups, but one pattern is common to all: students do better on the reading test but worse on the math test as they get older.

Alaska girls in both the fourth and eighth grades are more likely to have basic

Percentages of Alaska 4th and 8th Grade Students Scoring At or Above Basic Level, NAEP 2007

Gender	Reading		Math		
	4th	8th	4th	8th	
Boys	58%	65%	79%	73%	
Girls	66%	76%	79%	73%	
Income	Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Lunch		Not Eligible		
	44%	56%	66%	55%	
75%		80%	89%	84%	
Race and Ethnicity	Alaska Native	33%	45%	57%	49%
	White	77%	83%	90%	86%
	Black	54%	64%	67%	63%
	Hispanic	53%	69%	76%	66%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	60%	75%	79%	71%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007

reading skills than boys. In 2007, 66% of fourth-grade girls scored at least at the basic level in reading, compared with 58% of boys. By eighth grade, 76% of girls scored at the basic level or better, compared with 65% of boys.

Children from low-income families (as measured by eligibility for either free or reduced-price lunches) are far less likely to have basic reading and math skills, in either the fourth or the eighth

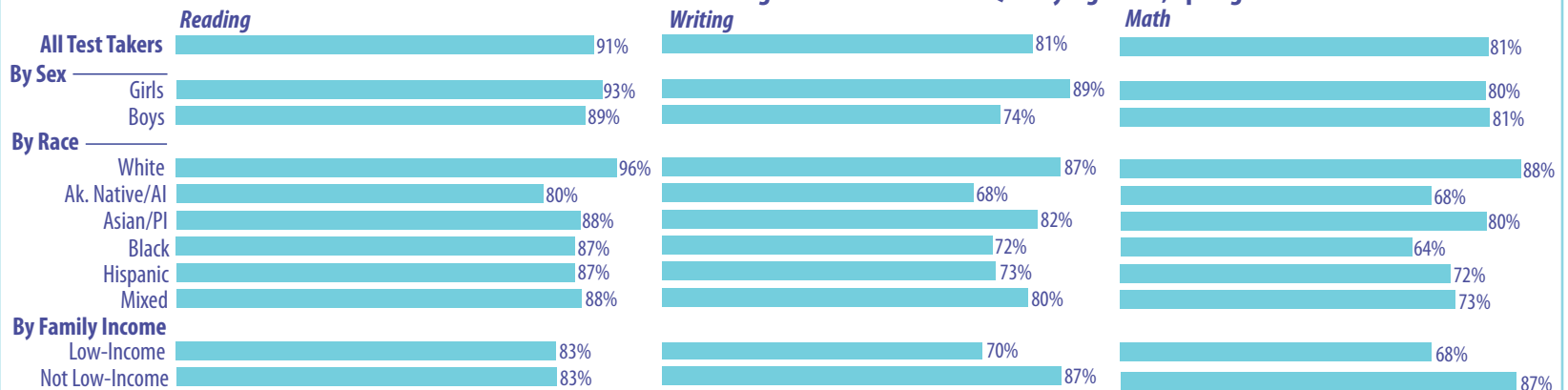
grade. The table also shows the gap that unfortunately is common across the country: White students out-score minority students. In Alaska, the gap is largest between Alaska Native and White students.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXAM

Another measure of achievement is the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. To get high-school diplomas, students have to pass reading, writing, and math sections of this exam. They first take the test in tenth grade, but can keep taking it until they pass, up to graduation time. Students who never pass get certificates of achievement instead of diplomas.

Unlike the NAEP, which is designed to show how well students meet given achievement standards over time and across states, the Alaska exam is designed to test minimum competence. The exam is still relatively new, and administrators have lowered or raised the passing score in the various sections several times since 2002—so scores across years are not entirely comparable. But the results for the Spring 2007 test do show similar patterns as the NAEP: girls do better than boys in reading and writing but not math; White students score higher than minorities; students from low-income families score lower than those from higher income families.

Share of 10th Graders Who Passed the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, Spring 2007



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

School Achievement (continued)

A FINAL NOTE ABOUT SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

After high school, young Alaskans are less likely to attend and complete college than their 18- to 24 year-old counterparts across the U.S. In 2005, Alaska had the dubious distinction of being the state with the lowest percentage of young adults who were either enrolled in or had completed college. Data from the 2005 American Community Survey show that fewer than one in four Alaskans (23%) ages 18 to 24 were either enrolled in or had completed college—a rate significantly below the national average of 41%.⁹

The share of young Alaskans seeking a college education does fluctuate from year to year. In 2003, when Alaska's rate was also the lowest in the nation, 21% of young adults in the state were going to college or had completed college degrees, and in 2004 the share was 29%.

The University of Alaska—the state's only public university—is also working to improve its retention and graduation rates, which have improved in recent years but are still below national averages for public universities. Only about 28% of full-time students working toward bachelor's degrees at UA earn them within six years, compared with an average of 56% at public universities around the country.¹⁰

ENDNOTES FOR EDUCATION

1. P. Kaufman, M. Naomi Alt, C. Chapman, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2001*, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2005-046), November 2004, page iv.
2. The graduation rate in Alaska is reported as a ratio, where the total number of graduates receiving a diploma before June 30th is divided by the sum of: (1) the number of graduates; (2) the number of dropouts who were in grade nine three school years earlier; (3) the unduplicated number of dropouts in grade ten two school years earlier; (4) the unduplicated number of dropouts in grade eleven in the previous school year; (5) the unduplicated number of dropouts in grade 12 during the current year; and (6) the number of grade 12 continuing students.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment—People 18 Years Old and Over, by Total Money Earnings in 2005, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex." Retrieved January 2008: http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032006/perinc/new04_001.htm.
4. J. Laird, G. Kienzl, M. DeBell, and C. Chapman, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2005 Compendium Report*. U. S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2007-059), June 2007.
5. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table retrieved January 2008: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat7.pdf>.
6. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *Student Effort and Educational Progress: Elementary/Secondary Persistence and Progress*. Retrieved January, 2008: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2007/section3/table.asp?tableID=701>.
7. M. Mather and D. Adams, *The Risk of Negative Child Outcomes in Low-Income Families*, A KIDS COUNT/PRB Report on Census 2000. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Population Reference Bureau, April 2006.

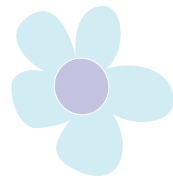
8. M. Wald and T. Martinez, *Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds*. A William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Working Paper, November 2003.

9. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. "Comparisons by Topic: Young adults enrolled in or completed college: Percent: 2005." Retrieved April 2008: http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/compare_results.jsp?i=470&dt=2&rt=2&yr=6&s=a&dtype=&rtype=&x=123&y=5.

10. Theodore L. Kassier and Alexandra Hill, "The University of Alaska: How Is It Doing?" *Understanding Alaska Research Summary* No. 12, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, May 2008.

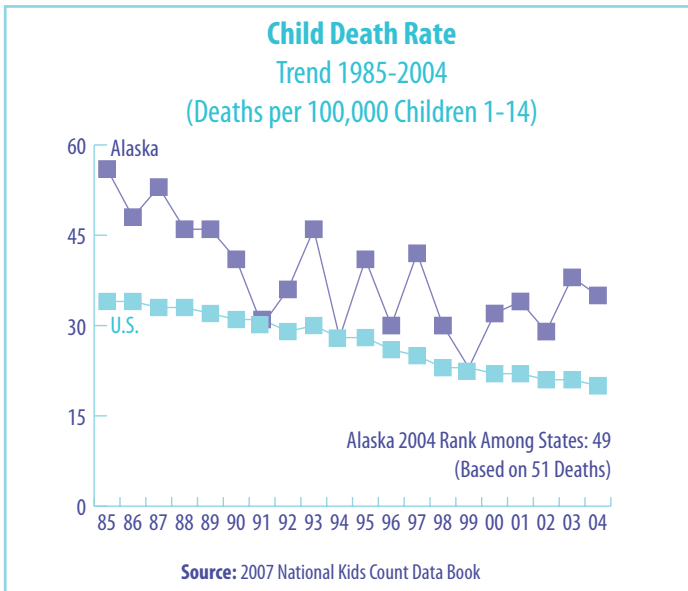
Children in Danger





The Alaska Department of Fish and Game puts it this way: you will never be far from a bear in Alaska, even if you don't see it. That's true whether you're in Anchorage or Fairbanks—the state's largest cities—or in some remote wilderness area. All three species of bears in North America—brown, black, and polar bears—are in Alaska. Brown and black bears are found throughout most of the state, and polar bears are along the northern and northwestern coastal areas. Biologists estimate that more than 50,000 black bears are in Alaska. Almost all the brown bears in the U.S. are in Alaska—in the range of 35,000 to 45,000. An estimated 4,000 to 6,000 polar bears are in northern coastal areas. Bears will attack people, but biologists say those attacks are relatively rare and offer advice about how to reduce your risks in bear country: make noise when you're hiking; try to travel in groups; don't crowd bears—especially sows with cubs—and don't leave food or garbage where it will attract bears.

Sources of information: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (www.wildlife.alaska.gov and www.adfg.state.ak.us); U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (www.blm.gov/ak/st).



nificant differences in injury-related deaths among children by race and ethnicity.⁴ Fatal injuries nationwide are most common among American Indian, Alaska Native, and Black children and least common among Hispanic and Asian and Pacific Island children.⁵

In Alaska, the total number of children is small, relative to numbers in other states. Even a small change in the actual number of deaths among children can substantially change the rate of deaths, so the year-to-year rate in Alaska can fluctuate sharply. Still, the child death rate in Alaska is also moving down—from close to 60 per 100,000 in 1985 to 35 by 2004. But that remains almost double the national rate.

Children in Alaska face different dangers and risks than children in most other parts of the nation. We have very long winters with extended periods of darkness and cold, and icy roads create dangerous driving conditions for much of the year. Alaska has thousands of lakes and rivers, as well as a very long coastline—so Alaskans spend a lot of time on the water. But waters in Alaska are deadly cold year-round.

Also, much of the state is remote and sparsely-populated, and dozens of small communities are accessible only air or water. Advanced medical or trauma care can be hours away. The use of snowmachines and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) is widespread in rural areas, among both children and adults—and every year children are hurt or even killed using off-road vehicles. Alaska is definitely a place where safety precautions are paramount for keeping children out of harm’s way.

DATA

As the trend graph to the left shows, 51 children ages 1-14 died in Alaska in 2004, translating into a rate of 35 per 100,000 children.⁶ That rate is 1.75 times higher than the national average of 20 per 100,000 children, ranking Alaska 49th among the states on this indicator.

Although the child death rate in Alaska has come down over the past two decades, it remained well above the national average for most of that time. But as we noted, the child death rate in Alaska can fluctuate sharply from year-to-year. To smooth out those fluctuations and provide a clearer picture of trends, we also report five-year averages calculated for us by the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics. The most recent such calculations are for the period 2001-2005 and are shown in the graph below.

The statewide death rate among Alaska’s children averaged 32 per 100,000 between 2001 and 2005, with wide variability by region. The death rate was highest in the Southwest (75 per 100,000 children) and Northern (60) regions of the state and lowest in the Gulf Coast (19), Southeast (22), and Anchorage (25) regions.

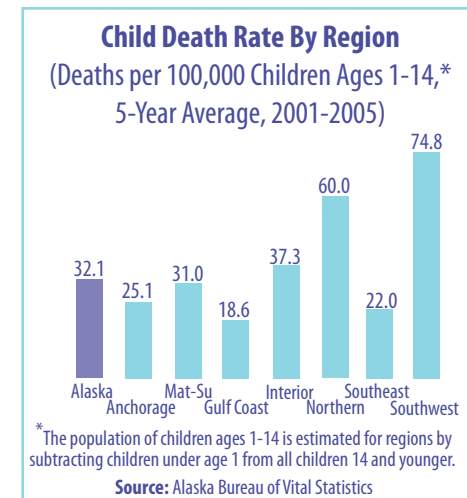
DEFINITION

The child death rate is the number of deaths from all causes (natural, accidental, and intentional) per 100,000 children between 1 and 14. Regional data reflect the child’s place of residence, not place of death. Please note that the child death rate reported here is for children age 1 and older. Deaths among infants (those under age 1) are reported in the Infant Mortality section. Also note that data on the manner of child death in Alaska includes a wider age range of children—ages 1 to 17.

SIGNIFICANCE

The death of a child is a calamity that can often be prevented—and the child death rate in the United States has been steadily declining over the past 15 years, from 31 per 100,000 children in 1990 to 20 per 100,000 by 2004.¹

Nationwide, accidents are the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 14, with the most common accidents being motor vehicle crashes. The youngest children (1 to 4) are more likely to die by accident than those 5 to 14.² Boys, especially older boys, are more likely to die or be seriously hurt in accidents, partly because in general boys tend to take more risks.³ There are also sig-



Child Death Rate (continued)

MANNER OF DEATH

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics does not report manner of death information for just those 1 to 14 but rather includes those through age 17.

As the adjacent table shows, Alaskans ages 1 through 17 who died from 2001 through 2005 were most likely to die accidentally (41.7% of deaths) or from natural causes (31.7%). Accidents include motor vehicle crashes, falls, fires, drowning, and some gun-related deaths.

Approximately 1 in 7 child deaths (14.4%) during this period were suicides, and 1 in 13 (7.6%) were due to homicides. But there is a substantial difference in causes of death between younger and older children.

The vast majority of deaths (85%) among children under age 10 were the result of natural causes or accidents, compared with 68% of deaths among older children (between 10 and 17). Among that older group, nearly 30% of deaths were the result of violence, including both suicides and homicides.

In addition to data from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, the Alaska Trauma Registry also reports fatal injuries among children ages 14 and under, including infants.⁷ A total of 165 Alaska children 14 or younger suffered fatal injuries between 2000 and 2004, or an average of 33 injury-related deaths per year.

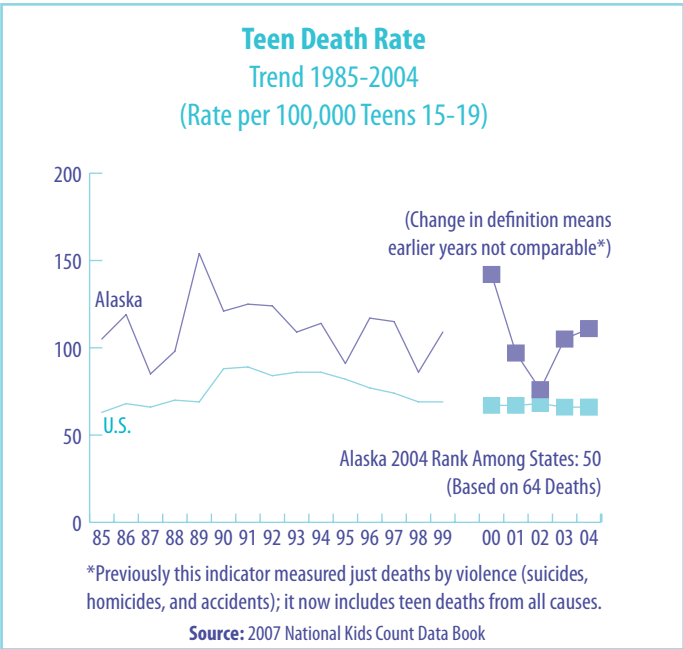
Among infants, all fatal injuries were due either to suffocation (72%) or assault (28%). The most common cause of injury death among children 1 to 14 was motor vehicle crashes (29%), followed by drowning (26%), assaults (17%), suicides (12%), pedestrian accidents (7%), poisoning (5%), and ATV accidents (4%).

How Do Alaska Children Die?

(Number of Deaths, by Age, 2001-2005)

	1-4	5-9	10-17	Total	Percent
Natural Causes	41	14	62	117	31.7%
Accidents	33	17	104	154	41.7%
Suicides	0	2	51	53	14.4%
Homicides	5	2	21	28	7.6%
Other	4	6	7	17	4.6%
Total	83	41	245	369	100%

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics



DEFINITION

In this section we present data on teenage death rates in three ways: deaths from both natural and preventable causes, deaths from violence (suicides, homicides, and accidents), and—a subset of violent deaths—deaths from suicide. The basis for all three calculations is the same: the number of teenagers (ages 15 to 19) in Alaska. All rates are per 100,000 teenagers in that age group.

SIGNIFICANCE

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle accidents kill more American teenagers than anything else, accounting for more than one third of all teen deaths.⁸ Teenagers and young adults ages 15 to 24 make up 14% of the total U.S. population but are responsible for approximately 30% of the total cost of motor vehicle accidents for both males (\$19 billion) and females (\$7 billion).

Data from the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey suggest that dangerous behavior among many teenagers regularly puts them at risk of being killed in motor vehicle crashes.⁹ For example, 10%

of ninth to twelfth graders reported that they rarely or never wear seat belts, bicycle helmets, or motorcycle helmets. Nearly 30% said that in the past month they had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking. One in ten also indicated that at least once in the previous 30 days they themselves had driven cars after consuming alcohol. All these behaviors are more common among boys than girls, so it is not surprising that boys are more likely to die than girls—the teen death rate for boys is more than twice that for girls.¹⁰

Slightly over 1,600 American teenagers took their own lives in 2005, making suicide the third leading cause of death among those 15 to 19 years old.¹¹ Thousands more teens attempt suicide each year. The 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey suggests that one in six high school students in the U.S. had seriously contemplated suicide in the previous 12 months (22% of girls and 12% of boys); nearly one in seven had planned a suicide attempt (16% of girls and 10% of boys); and one in twelve (11% of girls and 8% of boys) had tried to commit suicide in the previous year.¹² Although girls are much more likely than boys to think about and attempt suicide, they are much less likely to actually kill themselves.

The lives of teens and young adults are stressful. They are uncertain about what the future may hold and what they should do with their lives. They are filled with doubts about themselves and their abilities. Analysts say that most of those who commit suicide have mental disorders, and that depression and suicidal feelings can be treated.¹³ But it can be hard to get professional help, especially in Alaska’s remote villages.

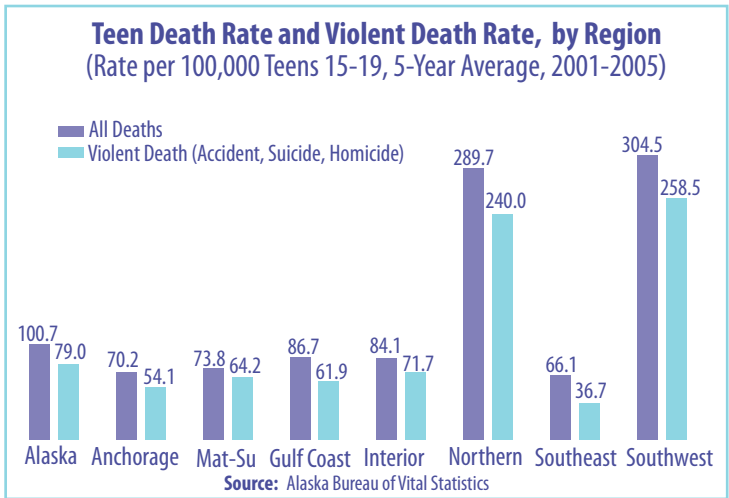
Alaska Natives in fact commit suicide at higher rates than teenagers of other races. But it isn’t only in Alaska that suicide rates among aboriginal teenagers are high. American Indian teenagers nationwide, and aboriginal teenagers in Canada and Mexico, also commit suicide at higher rates than other teenagers.¹⁴

DATA

Alaska had the highest teen death rate in the nation in 2004, at 111 per 100,000 teens ages 15-19. This rate (based on a total of 64 deaths that year) is almost 70% higher than the national average of 66 per 100,000 teens, as the trend graph to the left shows. Alaska had the highest teen death rate in the nation for three of the past five years, and in 2001 it had the second highest rate.

But because the teen death rate in Alaska is based on small numbers of actual deaths (typically about 50 to 60 a year), it can fluctuate substantially. To smooth out those fluctuations and give a better picture of trends, we also report five-year averages of teen deaths for Alaska and regions of the state. The bar graph below shows overall teen death rates and violent death rates around Alaska for the period 2001-2005.

The overall teen death rates in the Southwest (304 per 100,000) and Northern (290 per 100,000) regions were approximately three times higher than the state average of 101 in the most recent period. Alaska teens were least likely to die in Southeast Alaska (66), Anchorage (70) and the Mat-Su region (74).



Teen Death Rate (continued)

VIOLENT DEATH

The graph on the previous page makes it clear that teen death rates are driven by violent deaths. Of the 269 Alaska teenagers who died from 2001 to 2005, more than three-quarters died violently. The highest violent death rate in Alaska—259 per 100,000 in the Southwest region—was seven times higher than the lowest rate, in the Southeast region (37 per 100,000). The next highest violent death rate—240 per 100,000 in the Northern region—was also triple the rate for Alaska as a whole (79 per 100,000).

The adjacent pie chart and table show more detail about what kills teenagers in Alaska. During the period 2001-2005, accidents were the most common cause of teen death (38%), followed closely by suicides (31%). Homicides accounted for 10% of teen deaths. Natural causes accounted for only 18%. The remaining 3% were unclassified, because investigators couldn't determine how to classify them.

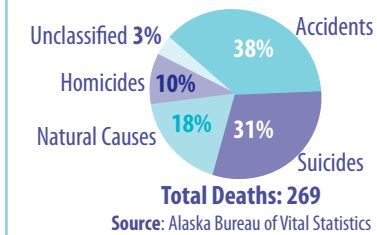
The table shows available regional information on death rates by cause. The numbers used to calculate these rates are small in some areas of the state, so we can only specifically break out Anchorage and the Interior region from the remainder of the state.

Rates of accidental death in all areas of the state are higher than rates for other causes, but accidents are much more likely to kill teenagers outside Anchorage. The rate of accidental death among teenagers in Anchorage was 28.5 per 100,000 teens in the period 2001-2005, compared with 32.2 in the Interior region and 48.6 in the remainder of the state.

Rates of homicide were higher in Anchorage (12 per 100,000) and the Interior (15 per 100,000) than in other parts of the state (7 per 100,000).

But rates of suicide were two to three times higher outside Anchorage. The rate in 2001-2005 was 13 per 100,000 in Anchorage and nearly 25 per 100,000 in the Interior. In the remainder of the state, the suicide rate was nearly 48 per

Causes of Teen Death in Alaska, 2001-2005



Teen Death Rates, By Manner and Region

(Rate per 100,000 Teens 15-19, 5-Year Average, 2001-2005)

Region	Accident	Homicide	Suicide	Natural
Anchorage	28.5	12.3	13.3	14.2
Interior	32.2	14.8	24.7	12.4
Remainder of State	48.6	6.6	47.8	21.4
Alaska	38.2	10.1	30.7	17.6

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

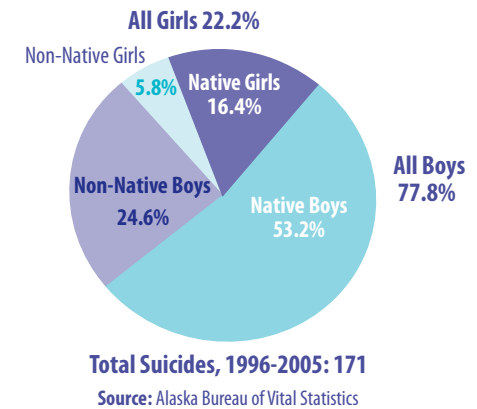
100,000. That suicide rate in areas outside Anchorage and the Interior was so high that teenagers in some parts of the state were just about as likely to die by suicide as from accidents.

TEEN SUICIDE RATE

Suicide among teenagers is a big worry in Alaska, particularly in rural areas. The two figures to the right show information about teen suicides from 1996 through 2005. Even though the rates of suicide for some areas of Alaska are very high, those rates are based on small numbers of suicides in any given year—and can vary a lot from year to year. So to give a reliable picture of suicide levels by region, we use ten-year average rates.

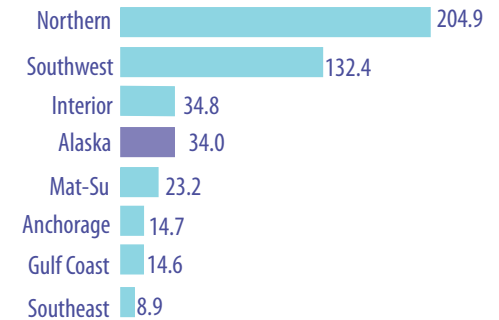
From 1996 through 2005, 171 Alaska teenagers killed themselves. The suicide rate for teenage boys (51 per 100,000) was more than triple the rate for girls (16 per 100,000). Alaska Natives, especially boys, are at the gravest risk. More than half (53%) of all teenagers who committed suicide in the past decade were Alaska Native boys, followed by Non-Native boys (24%), Alaska Native girls (16%) and Non-Native girls (6%).

Teen (15-19) Suicides by Sex and Race, 1996-2005



Alaska Teen Suicide Rate By Region

(Rate per 100,000 Teens 15-19, 1996-2005)



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

The suicide rate in the Northern region of the state was a staggering 205 per 100,000 teens in the past decade—more than 20 times the lowest rate, which was 9 per 100,000 in Southeast Alaska. The rate in Southwest Alaska (132 per 100,000) was also very high, and nearly four times the state average of 34. Suicide rates among teenagers in Anchorage and the Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, and Southeast regions were all considerably below the state average.



DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Child abuse or neglect exists when parents or adult guardians mentally, physically, or sexually abuse children in their care, or fail to keep children safe from such harm. During 2005, child protective service agencies across the United States received approximately 3.3 million reports of child neglect or harm involving an estimated 6 million children.¹⁵ Child abuse or neglect killed 1,460 children in the U.S. in 2005, a rate of 1.96 per 100,000 children. The vast majority (76.6%) of the children killed were under age four.

OCS PROCEDURES AND DATA

In Alaska, the Office of Children's Services (OCS) in the Department of Health and Social Services is the child protective agency that receives and investigates reports of child abuse or neglect. Anyone who suspects a child has been neglected or harmed can file a report with OCS, which then determines if the allegation should be investigated, based on the information provided and the degree of potential risk to the child. Allegations that are "screened in" are assigned for investigation, and allegations that are "screened out" are not further investigated. When OCS investigates allegations, it may or may not find them to be substantiated.

In this year's data book we present OCS information somewhat differently than we did last year, so the figures aren't directly comparable. Here we use total allegations of abuse and neglect as the starting point for our discussion. Last year we used reports of neglect. Reports can include more than one allegation—so the numbers we present this year are substantially higher.

The chart shows (1) the number of allegations of child abuse or neglect OCS received and screened in 2006 (the federal fiscal year, from October 2005 to September 2006); and (2) the number of allegations OCS substantiated in 2006. The reports OCS substantiates may be from the current or the previous fiscal year, because not all cases are resolved the

same year the investigation starts. So the number of substantiated cases shown in the chart is not a direct percentage of the number of cases screened for investigation in 2006.

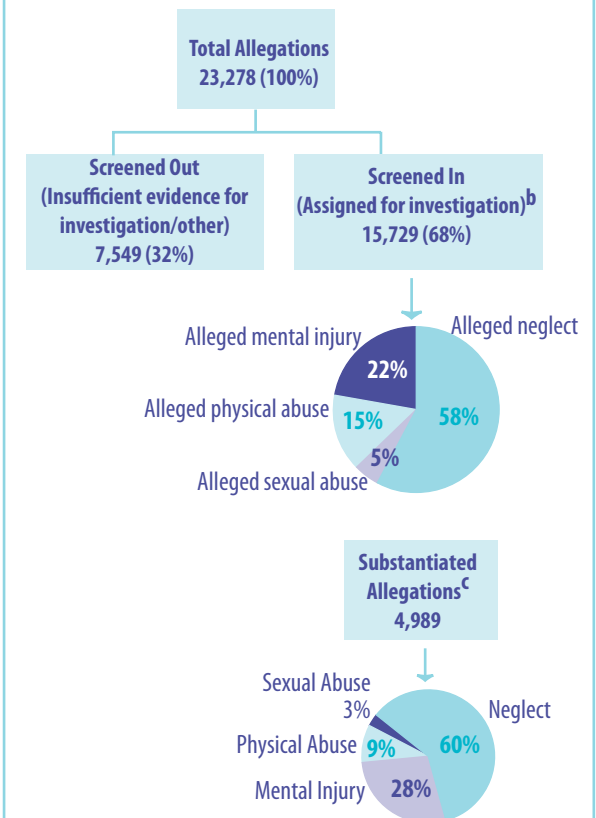
The table shows how many individual children OCS determined had in fact been abused in 2006, by the race of the children and the type of abuse they suffered.

In 2006, OCS received 23,278 allegations of child abuse or neglect. OCS assigned 15,729 of those allegations—68%—for investigation. It screened out 7,549, or 32%, and did not investigate them. Allegations may not be investigated for various reasons—for example, OCS determines that some don't include enough information to investigate; others may be reports mistakenly called in to OCS but not involving suspected child abuse. The majority of the 15,729 allegations assigned for investigation in 2006 alleged neglect (58%), followed by mental injury (22%), physical abuse (15%), and sexual abuse (5%).

In 2006, OCS substantiated 4,989 allegations of abuse—again, including some from the previous year. Of the substantiated allegations, 60% were for neglect, 28% mental injury, 9% physical abuse, and 3% sexual abuse. Remember that these are percentages of allegations, not percentages of individual children. There may be several allegations of abuse—for the same or different types of abuse—for the same child.

The table counts each victim only once for a specific type of abuse by race (under definitions OCS uses). For children of all

Allegations of Abuse and Neglect, 2006^a



^aFigures are for the federal fiscal year, October 1 - September 30.

^bInvestigations may not be completed in same fiscal year.

^cCases substantiated in 2006 may be from 2006 or the previous fiscal year.

Source: Office of Children's Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Victims of Substantiated Abuse, by Race and Type of Harm, 2006^a

(Children Under Age 18)

	Mental Injury	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Total	Percent
Alaska Native ^b	463	1,192	143	61	1,859	51%
White	291	537	129	49	1,006	27%
Other Races	70	153	41	10	274	8%
Not reported	212	209	82	26	529	14%
Total	1,036	2,091	395	146	3,668	100%

^aEach victim is counted once per type of harm substantiated.

^bIncludes children who are either Alaska Native alone or Alaska Native and some other race.

Source: Office of Children's Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

racers, neglect was the most common abuse. Half the documented victims of maltreatment in Alaska in 2006 were Alaska Native children, who make up about one-quarter of all children in Alaska. White children accounted for 27% of abuse; they make up about 63% of children in Alaska. Children of other races—including Black, Asian, and Pacific Island—suffered about 8% of substantiated abuse. No race was reported for 15% of children who were maltreated.

Child Injuries

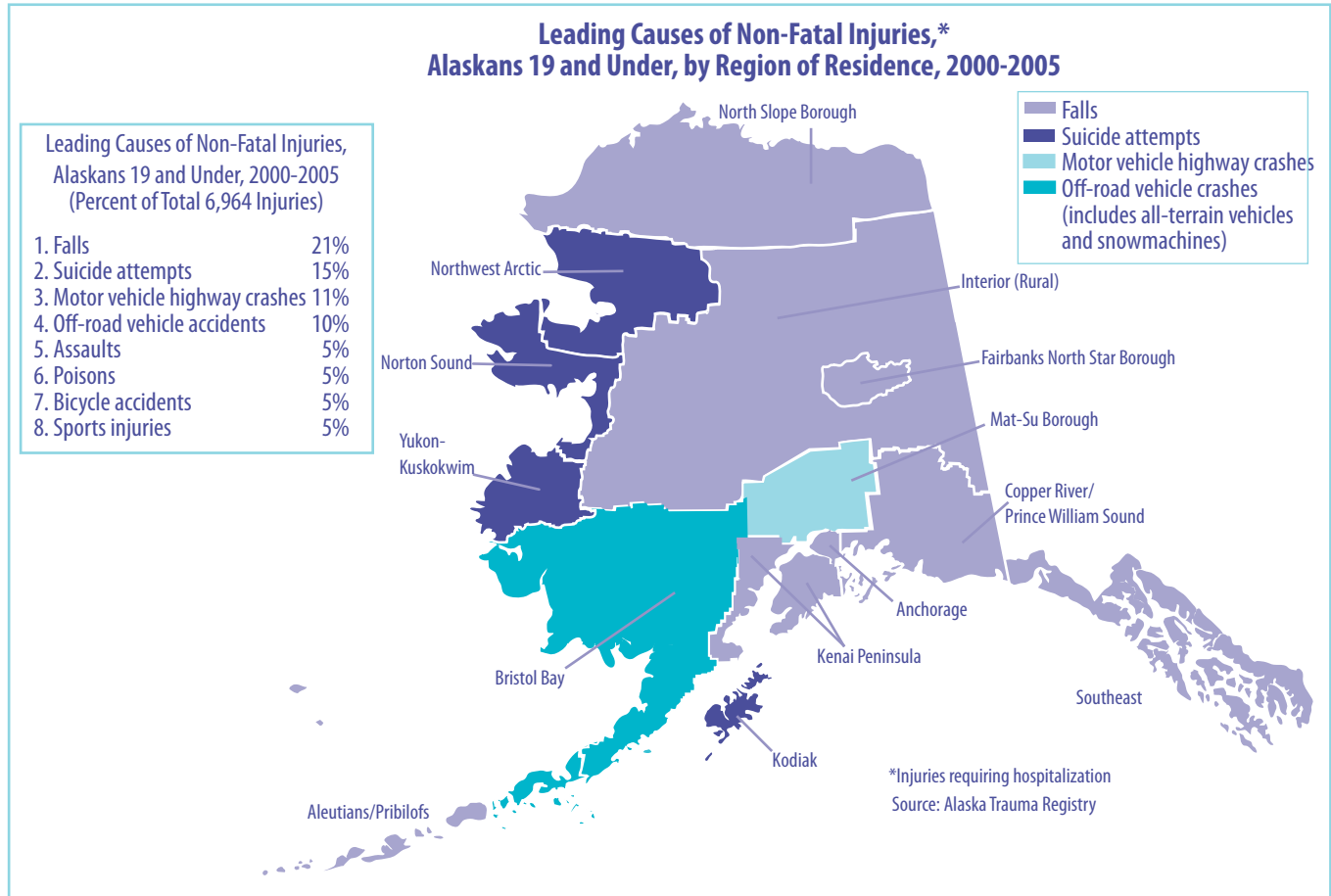
DEFINITION

This indicator presents data on Alaska children, ages 19 and under, who suffer injuries that require hospitalization. All data in this section are from the Alaska Trauma Registry, which collects information from each of Alaska's 24 acute care hospitals.¹⁶ We include intentional injuries—assaults and suicide attempts—as well as accidental injuries. Hospitalizations resulting from illness are not included.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children learn from their parents when it comes to behavior that improves their safety. That's the conclusion of a recent study conducted by the National Safe Kids Campaign.¹⁷ Such behavior includes wearing seat belts, life jackets, and bike helmets, as well as crossing streets at crosswalks. The study cited past research documenting that 4 out of 10 children riding with drivers not wearing seat belts were also not restrained, and 9 out of 10 children not wearing wear bike helmets had parents who never wear helmets. By contrast, 9 out of 10 children wore life jackets when they were in boats with adults wearing life jackets. Children wearing bike helmets typically reported they did so because their parents said it was a rule.

The study also included a survey with a nationally representative sample of children between the ages of 8 and 12. They were interviewed, along with their parents, about attitudes toward safety and practices that improved safety. The children reported that their parents were safety role models, along with their grandparents and teachers. These children also saw themselves as role models for friends and siblings. Interestingly, parents reported improving their safety practices when they became parents. Almost one-third of children said they had reminded their parents to wear seat belts, and both parents and children said they were more likely to take safety precautions when they were together.



DATA

Between 2000 and 2005, Alaska children 19 and under were admitted to hospitals for serious but non-fatal injuries 6,964 times. That's an average of 1,160 admissions per year and more than 3 per day.

The table next to the map above shows the leading causes of injuries statewide. The most common reason for hospitalization was falls (21%), followed by suicide attempts (15%), motor vehicles crashes (11%), off-road vehicle accidents, including both all-terrain vehicles and snowmachines (10%), and assaults, poisonings, bike accidents, and sports injuries, each accounting for 5%.

Reasons for hospitalizations vary among younger and older children. Falls were the leading cause of hospitalizations among those 15 and under in recent years, while among older teenagers (16-19) suicide attempts were the most common reason for hospital stays of 24 hours or more.

The map shows that the leading cause of non-fatal injury also differs among regions of the state. From 2000-2005, falls most commonly sent children and teenagers to the hospital in several areas—Anchorage, the Kenai Peninsula, the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the surrounding rural interior, the North Slope Borough, Southeast Alaska, the Copper River/Prince William Sound region, and the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands.

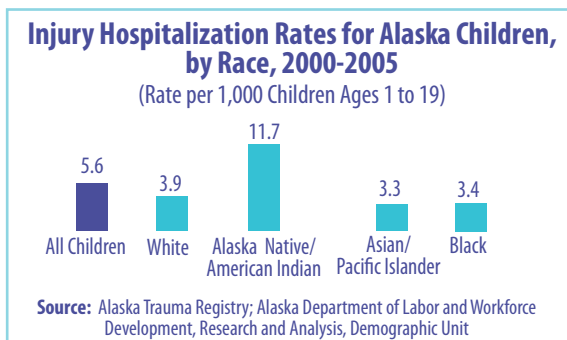


Attempted suicide was the leading cause of non-fatal injuries in four areas of the state: Northwest Arctic, Norton Sound, Kodiak, and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. In the Mat-Su, motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of injury, and in the Bristol Bay area crashes with off-road vehicles (including both all-terrain vehicles and snowmachines) sent the most children and teenagers to the hospital.

Hospital admissions for various kinds of non-fatal injuries also vary by race, and the two bar graphs on this page show injury information for children of different races.

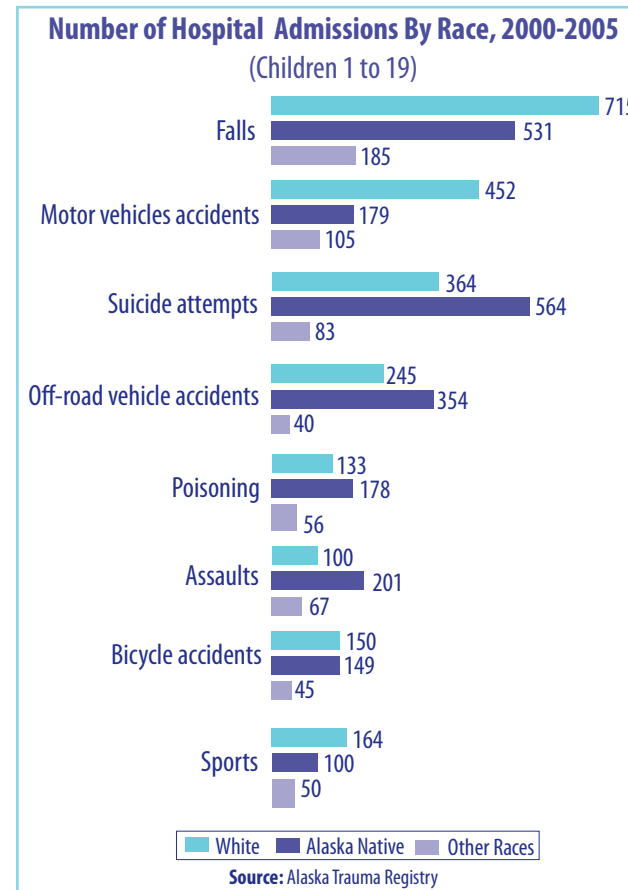
Keep in mind that about 67% of children and teenagers in the state are White, about 23% are Alaska Native, and 10% are of other races.

The graph below shows the hospitalization rate—that is, the rate per 1,000—among Alaska children ages 1 to 19 during the period 2000 to 2005. Overall, the rate among Alaska children was 5.6 per 1,000. But Alaska Native children and teenagers are much more likely than children of other races to be injured seriously enough to be admitted to the hospital—11.7 per 1,000, compared with less than 4 per 1,000 among White, Black, and Asian or Pacific Island children.



The graph below shows which kinds of injuries push hospitalization rates among Alaska Native children above rates among other children. Many more Alaska Native young people attempt suicide (and commit suicide, as we reported earlier); are hurt in accidents with snowmachines or all-terrain vehicles; are assaulted; and accidentally take poison.

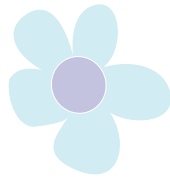
The higher number of injuries in accidents with off-road vehicles can be partially explained by the fact that many Alaska Native children and teenagers live in remote rural areas where use of off-road vehicles is much more common. But the other types of injuries—especially attempted suicides and assaults—are much more difficult to understand. A number of efforts are underway—in the Alaska Native community and elsewhere—to try to keep young people from attempting and committing suicide. Research has also linked much of the violence in rural Alaska to alcohol.



1. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, Comparisons by Topic: "Child Deaths: Rate per 100,000: 2004." Retrieved January 2008: http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/compare_results.jsp?i=80.
2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2007*. Retrieved September 2007: <http://childstats.gov/pubs.asp>, page 37.
3. Safe Kids Worldwide, *National Safe Kids Campaign Fact Sheet*. Retrieved September 2007: <http://www.usa.safekids.org/>; and Child Trends Data Bank, *Infant, Child, and Youth Death Rates*. Retrieved September 2007: <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/63ChildMortality.cfm>.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fatal Injuries Among Children by Race and Ethnicity—United States, 1999-2002." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, May 18, 2007, Vol. 56, No. SS-5.
5. Child Trends Data Bank; see note 3.
6. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, Profiles by Geographic Area: "Alaska." Retrieved January 2008: http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/profile_results.jsp?r=3&d&d=1&c=s&p=1&x=136&y=7.
7. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Trauma Registry. Data source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics; fewer than five occurrences are not included. Retrieved August 2007: http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/ipems/injury_prevention/trauma.htm.
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Teen Drivers: Fact Sheet*. Retrieved January 2008: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/teenmvh.htm>.
9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2005." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, June 9, 2006, Volume 55, No. SS-5. Retrieved September 2007: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/ss/ss5505.pdf.
10. Child Trends Data Bank. See note 3.
11. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System).
12. See note 9.
13. See National Alliance on Mental Illness, *Teenage Suicide*. Retrieved September 2007: http://www.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/Helpline1/Teenage_Suicide.htm, and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, *Facts for Families: Teen Suicide*. Retrieved September 2007: http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families.
14. Canadian Council on Social Development, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Red Por Los Derechos De La Infancia En Mexico, *Growing Up in North America: Child Health and Safety in Canada, the United States, and Mexico*, 2006, page 31.
15. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. *Child Maltreatment 2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007.
16. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Trauma Registry. Retrieved August 2007: www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/ipems/injury_prevention/trauma.htm.
17. A. Quraishi, A. Mickalide, and B. Cody, *Follow the Leader: A National Study of Safety Role Modeling Among Parents and Children*. Washington (DC): National SAFE KIDS Campaign, April 2005.

Juvenile Justice





Puffins are seabirds that provide some of the best entertainment in Alaska's coastal waters in the summer. That's partly because they're so colorful—with large, red and yellow beaks and orange webbed feet—but also because it seems so unlikely that they can actually fly. "Getting airborne is always touch-and-go" with puffins, as Alaska's Department of Fish and Game puts it, because they are "built for swimming underwater rather than flying." They stand about 14 inches high and weigh just over a pound on average. If you're out on a boat in south coastal areas of Alaska, you can often see puffins running along the surface of the water, getting up speed for takeoff. Much of their diet consists of small fish—and they're famous for the technique they use to carry fish to their young: they line the fish up crosswise in their bills, all the tails on one side and all the heads on the other, and they can add fish to the line-up without losing any already in their bills. There are two types of puffin—horned and tufted—in Alaska waters, with hundreds of puffin breeding colonies (either in underground burrows they dig or in crevices on rocky slopes) and perhaps millions of puffins.

Sources of information: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (www.adfg.state.ak.us and www.wildlife.alaska.gov); and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Seabird Information Series.

DEFINITION

The data used in this indicator are from both state and federal sources. The state figures are delinquency referrals among Alaskans ages 10 to 17. Police agencies refer juveniles to the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice following investigations or arrests, or when they are notified juveniles have violated court orders. These referrals are reasonable measures of juvenile crime, but they aren't the same as proof of guilt.

The federal data are juvenile arrest numbers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These data allow us to compare various types of juvenile crime in Alaska and the nation. Using two sources gives us a more complete picture of juvenile crime, but the numbers don't entirely match.

In this section we first examine rates and trends in juvenile crime in Alaska and then describe two approaches the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice uses to reduce crime. The first approach is one we've discussed in earlier data books—Alaska's youth court program. The second approach is Aggression Replacement Training, which the division uses in treatment facilities as well as with teenagers who are at risk of committing crimes.

BACKGROUND

The Division of Juvenile Justice has several goals: to hold juvenile offenders accountable; promote the safety of and restoration to victims and communities; and help offenders and their families develop the skills they need to keep juveniles who have already committed crimes from committing any more.

In its 2007 *Juvenile Justice Report Card*, the

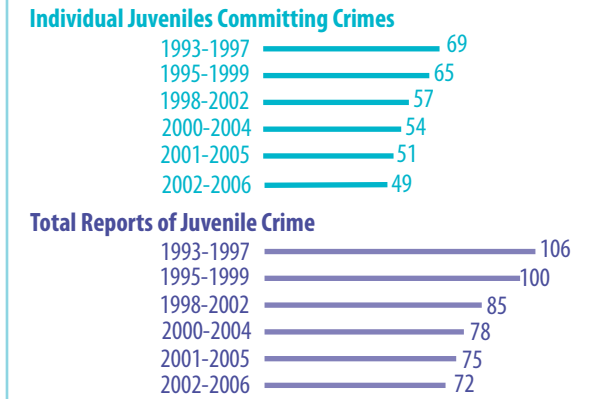
division describes its efforts toward those goals.¹ Community-work service is one way to hold juveniles accountable; offenders completed 82% of the community-work service hours ordered in 2007. Offenders also paid 96% of the ordered financial restitution to victims of crimes. The recidivism rate—the rate at which those previously convicted of crimes commit new crimes—was 28% among both the 144 teenagers released from secure facilities and the 309 released from supervised probation in 2007. The division reports this rate compares favorably with rates in other states that track recidivism similarly.

STATE CRIME DATA

The figures on this page show state data on trends in juvenile crime in Alaska and on types of crime by region in the most recent period, 2002-2006. Juvenile crime continued to decline in recent years, as it has since the mid-1990s. Property crimes continued to account for about half of all juvenile crime around the state.

The bar graph shows that the rates of individual juveniles committing crimes and of total crime reports both decreased by about 30% between 1993-1997 and 2002-2006. The rate of juve-

Juvenile Crime in Alaska, 1993-1997 to 2002-2006
(Referral Rates per 1,000 Juveniles 10-17, 5-Year Averages)



Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

niles committing crimes in the period 2002-2006 declined to 49 per 1,000 youths, down from 51 in the previous five-year period. Similarly, the rate for total reports of crime declined to 72 per 1,000, down from 75 in the previous five-year period.

Juvenile (Ages 10-17) Delinquency Referrals^a by Region and Type of Crime
(Annual Average, Fiscal Years 2002-2006^b)

Region	Crimes Against Persons		Crimes Against Property		Drug/Alcohol Laws		Other ^c		Total ^d	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Anchorage	441	17.6%	1281	51.0%	194	7.7%	595	23.7%	2511	100%
Mat-Su	101	19.1%	259	48.8%	67	12.7%	103	19.4%	530	100%
Gulf Coast	143	18.2%	353	44.9%	111	14.2%	178	22.6%	785	100%
Interior	148	20.5%	308	42.7%	104	14.4%	162	22.5%	722	100%
Northern	100	21.5%	244	52.2%	32	6.9%	90	19.4%	466	100%
Southeast	145	17.4%	365	43.8%	104	12.5%	220	26.4%	834	100%
Southwest	164	27.9%	295	50.1%	49	8.3%	81	13.8%	589	100%
Alaska	1,242	19.3%	3,105	48.2%	661	10.3%	1,429	22.2%	6,437	100%

^aThese are duplicate counts—meaning they include multiple referrals of the same juvenile; duplicated counts show the overall level of reported juvenile crime. Referrals include police reports and notices of probation violations. Juveniles charged with more than one type of crime in a single referral are included in only one category, with crimes against persons ranked first, property crimes second, drug and alcohol crimes third, and other crimes fourth.

^bThe state fiscal year is from July 1 through June 30. ^cIncludes probation violations, violations of public order and weapons laws, and miscellaneous other offenses. ^dAnnual average number of crimes.

Note: Percentages may total slightly more or less than 100 because of rounding.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Justice



The table on the previous page shows the annual average number and percentage of referrals from 2002 through 2006. That annual average was down about 250 from the previous five-year period. Crimes against property accounted for about 48% of all juvenile crime, violations of drug and alcohol laws another 10%, and crimes against persons 20%. The remaining 22% consisted of various crimes, including violations of probation and of public order and weapons laws.

The proportions of crime varied somewhat by region. Crimes against persons made up nearly 28% of all juvenile crime in the Southwest, but just 17% in the Southeast. Drug and alcohol violations made up more than 14% of juvenile crime in the Gulf Coast and Interior regions but only about 7% in the Northern region.

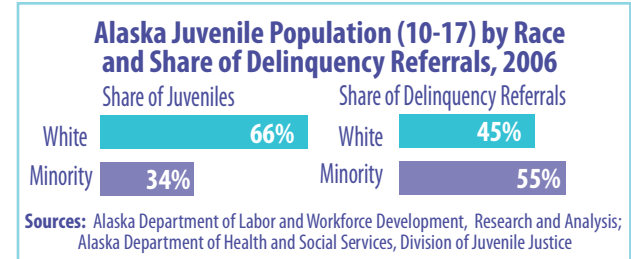
Disproportionate Minority Contact

A challenge for the juvenile justice system in Alaska and nationwide is what system administrators call “disproportionate minority contact”—that is, the percentage of minority juveniles referred to the justice system exceeds their percentage of the overall juvenile population. In a report called *Reducing Racial Disparities in Juvenile Detention*, the authors note that by 1997 minority juveniles in detention exceeded their proportion of the population in 49 states.² The number of juveniles held in secure detention increased by 47% between 1983 and 1997—but the increase among minority juveniles was 76%, compared with 21% among White juveniles.

The bar chart at the top of the page compares the shares of White and minority juveniles in Alaska to their shares of delinquency referrals in 2006. It’s clear that referrals of minority juveniles far exceed their share of Alaska’s juvenile population. In 2006, minorities made up 34% of those ages 10 to 17 in Alaska but 55% of the delinquency referrals.

The table below the bar graph shows the racial and regional distribution of Alaskans ages 10 to 19 in 2005. The second table shows a similar racial and regional distribution for juveniles ages 10 to 17 referred to the justice system from 2002 through 2006.

We aren’t able to get population estimates for precisely the same age and race categories for the general juvenile population and for those who go through the justice system. Still, we can see that the problem of disproportionate minority contact exists around the state. For example, Alaska Natives make up about 83% of all juveniles in the Southwest region but 92% of delinquency referrals. In Anchorage, Black juveniles are referred to the justice system at about twice their share of the juvenile population.



Alaska Population, Ages 10-19, by Race and Region, 2005

Region	Alaska Native ^a	Black	White	Asian / Pacific Isl.
Anchorage	11.8%	6.5%	73.4%	8.3%
Mat-Su	10.9%	2.2%	84.1%	2.9%
Gulf Coast	13.3%	1.0%	79.7%	6.0%
Interior	16.9%	5.7%	74.3%	3.1%
Northern	84.6%	0.8%	12.4%	2.2%
Southeast	24.3%	1.2%	68.9%	5.7%
Southwest	83.3%	0.9%	13.9%	1.9%
Alaska	22.2%	4.1%	68.2%	5.6%

^a Includes all those who identified themselves in the 2000 U.S. census as Alaska Native or Alaska Native and some other race. Also includes American Indians, who make up 0.5% of Alaska’s population.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Unit

Total Juveniles (10-17) Referred To Juvenile Justice System, by Race and Region, Fiscal Years 2002 - 2006^a

Region	Alaska Native	Black	White	NH/ Pacific Isl.	Asian	More Than One Race	Other	Unknown
Anchorage	16.6%	11.8%	47.2%	4.0%	6.0%	9.7%	2.8%	2.0%
Mat-Su	8.9%	1.3%	82.8%	0.2%	0.8%	4.3%	0.4%	1.2%
Gulf Coast	11.3%	1.2%	72.7%	0.4%	4.0%	5.8%	0.6%	4.0%
Interior	30.5%	7.5%	56.1%	0.2%	0.3%	3.2%	0.7%	1.5%
Northern	89.4%	0.3%	1.9%	0.1%	0.1%	5.0%	0.3%	2.8%
Southeast	35.7%	1.7%	51.2%	0.9%	0.6%	6.0%	0.7%	3.1%
Southwest	91.7%	0.2%	4.3%	0.2%	0.1%	2.2%	0.1%	1.2%
Alaska	30.1%	6.2%	48.4%	1.9%	3.1%	6.7%	1.4%	2.2%

^aThis is an unduplicated count of all individual juveniles referred to Alaska’s juvenile justice system from 2002 through 2006. Race is reported by the juvenile.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice



FEDERAL CRIME DATA

The figures on this page are based on federal data, and they allow us to compare juvenile crime in Alaska and nationwide.

The small bar chart shows how much of all crime—that is, combined juvenile and adult crime—is committed by juveniles. Alaska juveniles commit a larger share of property crimes but a smaller share of violent crimes than juveniles nationwide. As of 2005, juveniles committed nearly 32% of property crimes in Alaska, while in the U.S. as a whole juveniles were responsible for 26% of property crimes. By contrast, juveniles in Alaska committed about 12% of violent crimes, compared with the nearly 16% of violent crimes juveniles committed throughout the country.

The adjacent figure shows that in 2005 juveniles in both Alaska and in the U.S. as a whole were arrested at much lower rates than in 1994 for all crimes except one—driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The overall arrest rate for juveniles in Alaska was 9,411 per 100,000 in 1994, compared with 5,362 in 2005—a drop of more than 40% in a decade. The juvenile arrest rate was also down 30% across the country during the same period—a substantial decline but not as much as in Alaska.

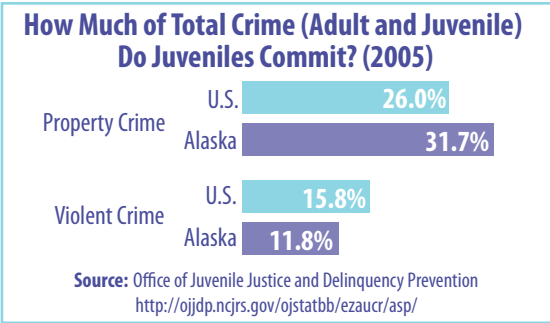
Juvenile arrests for major property crimes (like burglary and arson) were down the most between 1994 and 2005—60% in Alaska and 50% nationwide. But property crime still remains more common among juveniles in Alaska than in other places.

Arrests for violent crimes like murder and aggravated assault dropped 40% in Alaska and 44% across the country. But violent crime by juveniles remains more widespread in the U.S. as a whole than in Alaska.

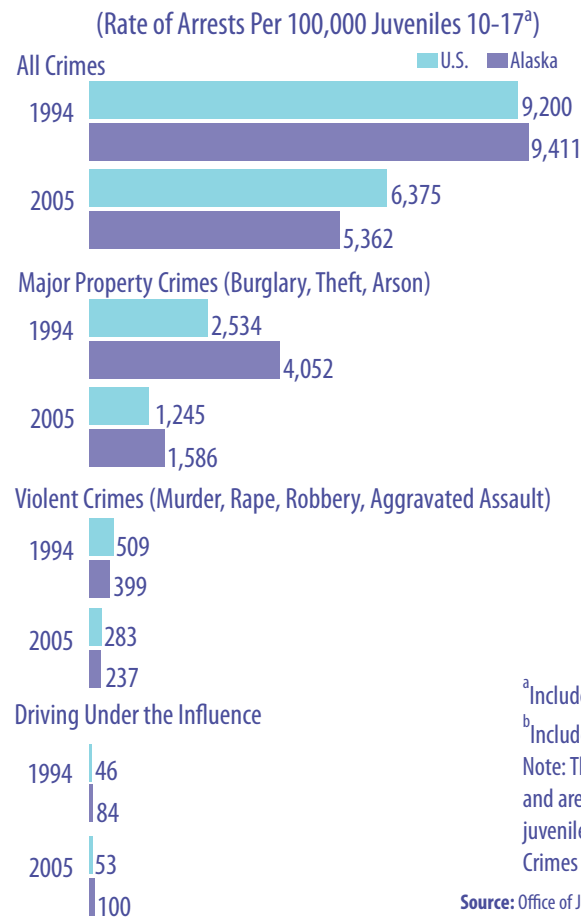
Juvenile arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol still make up a small share of juvenile crime, but

the juvenile arrest rate for that crime has increased since 1994—up from 84 per 100,000 in Alaska in 1994 to 100 by 2005, and up from 46 per 100,000 to 53 nationwide in the same period.

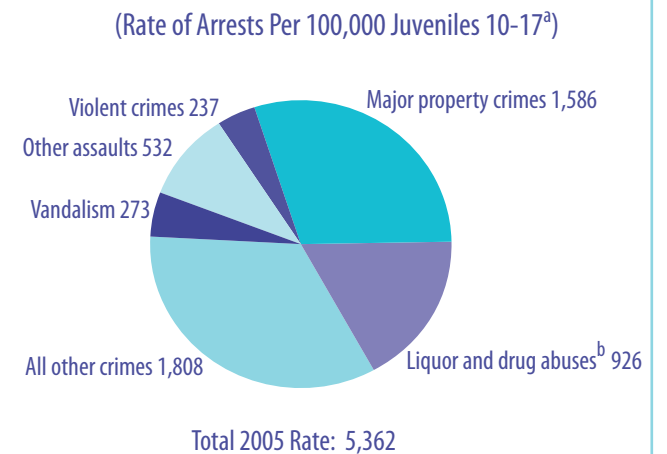
The pie chart shows the breakdown of juvenile crime in Alaska in 2005, as reported by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Major property crimes are the most common type of crime, but liquor and drug abuses (which include not only driving under the influence but also various other violations of drug and alcohol laws) also contribute a significant share to juvenile crime.



FBI Estimates of Juvenile Arrest Rate, U.S. and Alaska, 1994 and 2005



Breakdown of Alaska Juvenile Arrest Rate, 2005



^aIncludes multiple arrests of same juvenile.

^bIncludes driving under the influence of alcohol and violations of drug and alcohol laws.

Note: These federal figures on arrest rates differ somewhat from state juvenile referral reports and are for single years. We report state data in five-year averages; because the number of juveniles in Alaska is relatively small, figures are more subject to year-to-year variations. Crimes included in various categories also differ in state and federal figures.

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007. <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezaucr/>



PROGRAMS FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Youth Courts

In our past two data books we've reported on youth courts in Alaska. Youth courts are an alternative to the more formal justice system for those who have committed less serious offenses, and they have become common throughout the United States.

In Alaska, probation officers of the Division of Juvenile Justice review delinquency reports and determine an appropriate referral for each juvenile who comes into the system. Among the options are counseling, formal court proceedings, and youth court.

In youth courts, teenage volunteers assume the roles of attorney, judge, bailiff, and juror; they first go through training and are assisted by adult volunteers. But it is the teenage volunteers who determine sanctions for their peers who have committed crimes. The most common offenses adjudicated in youth courts include theft, vandalism, alcohol violations, disorderly conduct, and assault.³ Youth courts rarely accept juveniles who have prior felony arrests or who have previously been in juvenile court.

The majority of youth courts in the U.S. (93%) are dispositional—that is, the offender has already admitted guilt—so they don't typically determine guilt or innocence but rather try to determine a fair sentence for the offence.⁴

Only three states have adjudicatory programs, and Alaska is the only one with a statute that specifically mandates an adjudicatory program.⁵ That means juveniles who come before youth courts in Alaska have the option of pleading not guilty, have a hearing where facts of the case are discussed, guilt or innocence is determined, and a disposition is given. Still, even in Alaska, few juveniles who come before youth courts enter not-guilty pleas.

In a recent United Youth Courts of Alaska Newsletter, a 16-year old boy described how youth court led him to attend classes to understand the effects of his crime on the victim and to avoid situations that could lead to future trouble.⁶ He said that until then he hadn't actually realized how his actions affected the victim.

Aggression Replacement Training

The Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice reports that it adopts programs to modify dangerous or criminal juvenile behavior only after these programs have been evaluated as being effective.⁷ One such program is Aggression Replacement Training, intended to teach teenagers new ways of responding to situations that would previously have led them to become aggressive. It has been used in several other states and, thus far, evaluations from these states have shown promise in improving social functioning and reducing recidivism among juvenile delinquents.⁸ In Alaska, the participants are juveniles who have been aggressive, are on probation or in secure facilities, and are at risk of committing more crimes.

Aggression Replacement Training is a 10-week, 30-hour skill-training class for groups of 8 to 12 juveniles three times a week. It was first offered in June 2004 to a limited number of juveniles in Division of Juvenile Justice facilities in Anchorage, and then starting in the winter of 2005 it was expanded to facilities in Juneau, Nome, Bethel, and Fairbanks.

By spring 2008, about 500 juvenile offenders had completed the training. The division hopes to expand the program and help juveniles before they become aggressive, by offering after-school classes as alternatives to suspension and expulsion, or by providing classes through other programs, such as Boys and Girls Clubs.⁹

ENDNOTES FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

1. State of Alaska Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice, *Juvenile Justice Report Card: 2007*. Retrieved August 2007: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/djj/pdf/ReportCard2007.pdf>
2. Eleanor Hinton Hoytt, V. Schiraldi, B. Smith, and J. Ziedenberg, *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform No.8: "Reducing Racial Disparities in Juvenile Detention."* Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001.
3. National Association of Youth Courts: *Facts and Stats*. Retrieved January 2008: <http://www.youthcourt.net/content/view/35/49/>
4. See note 3.
5. Michelle Heward. *An Update on Teen Court Legislation*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, with support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved September 2007: www.youthcourt.net
6. *United Youth Courts of Alaska Newsletter*. Volume 3, Issue 2, February 2008.
7. State of Alaska Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice, *System Improvements Update Report*, January 2006.
8. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Model Programs Guide*. "Aggression Replacement Training (ART)." Retrieved August 2007: http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/TitleV_MPG_Table_Ind_Rec.asp?id=292
9. Personal communication with Rob Seward, August 21, 2007.